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# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

July 7, 2003

## Seize the Time

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A STRATEGY  
AGAINST EMPIRE



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## Editorial

# Smokescreen of Compassion

**W**ith much fanfare, President George Bush has committed the United States to fight AIDS.

"The suffering in Africa is great. The suffering in the Caribbean is great. The United States of America has the power, and we have the moral duty to help," Bush said on May 27 as he signed the Initiative To Fight AIDS Abroad. His largess beamed around the world, Bush was infused with the glow of compassionate conservatism. Increasing funds to treat and prevent AIDS is a good thing. Yet giving kudos to Bush for his AIDS initiative is like praising Dracula for visiting a Red Cross blood bank.

An estimated 40 million people in the world now have AIDS. By 2010 that number is expected to reach 100 million. The spin on the initiative was that Bush has set a standard for caring that the rest of the world is now challenged to match. But like so much about this administration, what you see, via the media, is not what you get.

Bush's proposal, which provides \$15 billion over five years to help 14 AIDS-plagued countries (12 in Africa and 2 in the Caribbean), has three critical flaws.

First, it is a sop to Christians who are fundamentally opposed to the use of condoms, the most effective tool in preventing HIV infection. Under the package passed by Congress and signed into law by Bush, Christian missionaries will be allocated \$1 billion to teach Africans the virtues of abstinence.

Second, under the Bush plan only 2 million people with AIDS—a small fraction of those with the disease—will be provided with life-saving anti-retroviral therapy.

Third, Bush's AIDS initiative is designed to give political cover as the administration works to protect pharmaceutical corporations from attempts by developing countries to obtain affordable, generic AIDS medicine. Were generic anti-retroviral drugs readily available, the price of treatment, in some cases, would fall from \$15,000 per year per patient to \$150 to \$300 per year per patient, according to Health GAP (Global Access Project). In effect, the administration has been working on all fronts to protect property rights (drug company patents on AIDS drugs) at the expense of human life (the millions of people with AIDS who will die because they do not have access to AIDS drugs).

At the 2001 WTO meeting in Doha, Qatar, all participating countries signed the Doha

Declaration, which permitted AIDS-plagued countries to put public health needs over the intellectual property rights of pharmaceutical companies. However, the developing world has been battling the United States, the European Union, Japan and the pharmaceutical industry over a WTO restriction that limits the right of countries without pharmaceutical industries to import generic drugs from countries that have such industries.

The United States is now attempting an end run around Doha and WTO, via the current negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). The Bush administration is demanding that FTAA contain provisions that supercede any WTO agreement and protect the intellectual property rights of drug manufacturers. In addition to making it much more difficult for Latin American nations to provide affordable generic AIDS drugs to their own populations, the current version of FTAA would make it impossible for South America's pharmaceutical industry to

**Bush's AIDS policies make life a commodity, something you can purchase if you can pay the price.**

export affordable generic anti-retroviral drugs to Sub-Saharan Africa, as is now planned.

In a letter to the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Health GAP's Asia Russell put it this way:

Current U.S. obstruction of a workable solution at the WTO on the issue of access to generic medicines for countries with pharmaceutical markets too small to permit efficient domestic manufacturing ... indicates that the United States is not committed to upholding its commitment at Doha, and the second draft FTAA text confirms that the United States intends to support an agenda which would prioritize the interest of U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturers over the public health needs of the 32 developing countries negotiating the FTAA.

In essence, Bush's AIDS policies make life a commodity, something you can purchase if you can afford the drugs that could keep you alive or something you are granted by a beneficent ruler through programs like Initiative To Fight AIDS Abroad. And that is neither compassionate nor conservative; it is evil.

—Joel Bleifuss

# In These Times

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## Broken Families

It was encouraging to see the issue of America's dysfunctional justice system highlighted in Salim Muwakkil's essay, "Throwing Away the Key" (May 26). More overlooked than the racial, financial and social harm being caused by America's addiction to imprisonment, however, is the devastation of families of the imprisoned. Often a parent is taken from the family, leaving behind children and spouses to fend for themselves with little to no support from the state.

It goes without saying that we need some form of punishment for those who break society's rules, but we should be sure that the punishment is serving the purpose for which it is intended. With 70 percent of inmates incarcerated for nonviolent offenses, it seems that there are better, far less destructive methods available. In his book *Justice that Restores*, Charles Colson outlines this issue in comprehensive terms. America's continued, long-term warehousing of more than 2 million souls in prison, with no effort at rehabilitation, will only serve to complicate our already serious social problems.

Daniel S. Wiant

McKean Federal Correctional Institution  
Bradford, Pennsylvania

## A Just War

In response to the general tone of *In These Times'* Iraq coverage: The United States was attacked during a time of peace on September 11, 2001. Since the attacks, the world is living under a changed strategic paradigm. America's critics have failed to realize the threats America is now facing: emergence of terrorist organizations on a scale never seen before and rogue regimes ready to collude with them.

Terrorist organizations have essentially allowed rogue states to privatize their foreign and defense policies. With rogue regimes providing financial and logistic support, terrorist groups are more than willing to carry out attacks on their common enemy—the United States. And the 9/11 terrorists did not need weapons of mass destruction; they just used boxcutters to turn jetliners into such weapons. In that case, the crucial factors had been the longterm planning and organizational support and sanctuaries provided by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. So America could not have afforded to wait for another 9/11 to find out Saddam's links with terrorist organizations. His past record should have been enough.

There was another compelling reason to oust Saddam's genocidal regime. Haithem al-

Hassani, a spokesman for the Iraqi-Canadian Coordinating Committee, a Toronto-based alliance of various Iraqi groups in exile, told the *Canada Post* before the war that those who oppose an American-led invasion on the grounds that civilians would be killed fail to realize that people were already dying because of Saddam's misrule: "In any war situation, there must be some innocents that will die, but the thing is in Iraq, as we speak, innocents are dying, I'm talking in thousands."

Another Iraqi-Canadian, who said his family in Iraq would be harmed if his name were published, told the same newspaper that he too was against the war with Iraq—until he visited his native country a few months ago. After seeing how Saddam had diverted money to lavish palaces and security forces while the Iraqi people went without food, water, schools and hospitals, he said he now wanted Canada to support a war to oust Saddam. "I was against doing anything against my country, but I am with [the war] now. Let [Iraqis] suffer for a few months, but they will be living like human beings for the rest of their lives."

Mahmood Elahi

Ottawa

## But Lay Off Cuba

I have serious problems with Patrick Michael Rucker's "Dissent from Within" (May 5). First, what would be the reaction of the authorities in this country if the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington offered free equipment and training to critics of the U.S.

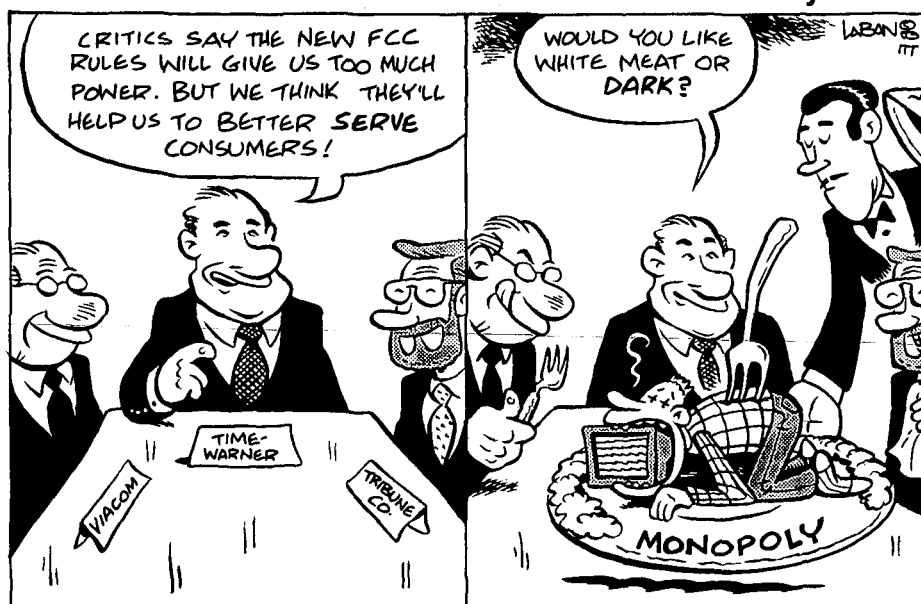
government for the purpose of overthrowing it? Second, we can't understand the latest events in Cuba without understanding that there have been four hijackings by "dissidents" in recent months—of one boat and three planes—all risking the lives of civilian passengers. In each case the perpetrators had guns and hand grenades, not exactly mail-order items in Cuba. The Helms-Burton Act, which is the law of the land, contains specific language justifying a U.S. attack on Cuba if Washington considers the situation on the island too chaotic. Sure enough, the U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic has recently threatened Cuba and Fidel Castro with the example of Iraq and Saddam Hussein. So, do Cubans—and not only Castro—have reasons to be rattled? No country could be expected to ignore such menacing signals.

Oswaldo Paya may want to bring more openness to Cuban society and politics, but I fear that, as usual, the main motivation for the present anti-Cuba campaign is not to bring about democracy but to impose unbridled capitalism. It will be tragic if his efforts are misused by Washington's ambitions.

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Terry LaBan



## Bumpy Road

Plan for peace gets U.S. push toward uncertain destination

By Charmaine Seitz

JERUSALEM—In the Bush administration's first foray deep into Middle East peacemaking, nothing was left to chance. When Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in May to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and newly appointed Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, even the timing of the party's statements and counterstatements was orchestrated to give the impression of a smooth transformation toward reconciliation. Hence, a meeting between Sharon and Abbas privately characterized as "disastrous" was called "very positive" by both sides.

Behind the scenes, the new engagement was marked by rancor. The diplomatic push to showcase the road map, a document painstakingly crafted by Russia, the European Union, United Nations, and the United States, was met obstinately by an Israeli government ideologically opposed to most of its tenets. "The road map is not worth the paper used in printing it," declared transportation minister Avigdor Lieberman. The Israeli cabinet, made up of settlement proponents, could not swallow the road map's incremental call for a settlement freeze. The cabinet eventually accepted the document, adding 14 reservations that had the effect of turning the plan on its head.

But the three-stage plan for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the product of months of difficult diplomacy, and certainly not a Palestinian favorite. The Palestinian complaint was consistently that the plan remained predicated upon Israel's security requirements and gave short shrift to Palestinian humanitarian concerns. At the same time, Palestinians pointed out, there was absolutely no way of making the enclosed timetable stick.

Still, as one opposition leader said, "The Palestinian Authority has no other options." With newly named Abbas personally convinced that the armed aspects of the Palestinian uprising must end and with the rest of Palestinian society exhausted, the Palestinian leadership was in no position to reject the U.S.-backed proposal. Even Hamas, the largest Palestinian opposition group, indicated that if Israel stopped its assassinations and incursions and undertook a significant prisoner release, the way would be open for a comprehensive ceasefire.

Israel, however, rejected that proposal out of hand. "We have no intention of negotiating or talking to Hamas or any other kind of terrorist organization," says

they say were three-quarters decimated in Israel's Gaza and West Bank incursions. Even that may not be easy: As long as Israeli troops move freely in areas ostensibly under Palestinian Authority control, Palestinian officials say they won't bother to reinstate security. "Life must get easier to convince people" such an effort would be worth it, says a Dahlan aide.

Given these hurdles and after months in which the United States had refused to apply any pressure, President Bush finally committed to calling a Jordan summit that included all the major players. American officials tried to remain optimistic. "Let's not look for the 56-yard pass right away or the 54-yard field goal," Powell said, referring to dramatic football plays. "We have to get this started. The tensions are great and the mistrust is high."

But as *In These Times* went to press, one day prior to the theatrical June 4 event in which Bush, Abbas and Sharon would renounce violence in accordance with the road map's first step, Israeli officials remained opposed to any wording outside the usual Israeli lexicon describing its army as fighting "a war on terrorism," not offensively wielding force. Meanwhile, travel restrictions on Palestinians were tightened even further. "This creates very bad feelings on the part of the Palestinian people," says labor minister Ghassan Khatib, sitting in his home cloistered by patrolling military.

While U.S. officials lent credibility to the road map process by appointing a team to follow up on the three-stage plan, observers are worried that the administration has neither the stamina nor the time required to work out details for implementing the plan. "Sharon's current position is entirely consistent with his advocacy of a Palestinian 'state' divided into enclaves that take up around 50 percent of the territories," writes Israeli analyst Yossi Alpher, "and that does not involve the dismantling of settlements, which in his view serve a permanent strategic defensive purpose."

In other words, the only hope for a viable two-state solution is if Bush himself is there cajoling and pressuring the parties along the way. Given the looming presidential elections and increasing pressure from Israel lobby groups to oppose the road map, Palestinian and Israeli analysts believe that this brief window of peace-making opportunity may soon close. ■



Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, at left, and Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas.

a foreign ministry spokesperson. Instead, it wants the Palestinian Authority to outlaw its opposition and forcefully disarm the various armed wings that continue anti-Israel attacks.

While Abbas is opposed to such a crack-down, calling it an invitation to civil war, he and Palestinian security officials are mum on their exact security plans. Abbas' security chief, Muhammad Dahlan, has met twice with opposition leaders, but says no deal can be finalized until the Palestinians rebuild their security forces, which



## Bad to Worse

### FCC approves even more media consolidation

By Dan Levine

The *Hartford Courant* treated its readers to a particularly crafty editorial on April 28, arguing that the Federal Communications Commission should abandon its restrictive rules on media cross ownership because—get this—they violate the right to free speech.

Six paragraphs into its missive, the nation's longest continuously published daily decided to acknowledge its own stake in the upcoming FCC vote.

"This newspaper is part of Tribune Co., which owns 26 television stations across the country. In addition to the *Courant*, Tribune's Connecticut portfolio is made up of WTIC, Channel 61; WTXN Channel 20; the *Advocate* weekly newspapers; the dailies in Stamford and Greenwich;

ctnow.com; and ValuMail, a direct-mail business," they wrote.

Indeed, the Tribune Company's business model is most apparent in Connecticut: Prior to June 2, Tribune violated FCC rules twice over by owning two TV stations and a daily newspaper in the Hartford market, escaping divestiture only through a federal waiver. Nationally, the Tribune Company is regarded as one of the main corporate lobbyists trying to crash the media regulatory system, along with Gannett Newspapers and the New York Times Company.

They're succeeding. The FCC followed its orthodox pro-deregulation chairman Michael Powell and voted 3 to 2 on June 2 to rescind prohibitions on companies owning a newspaper and TV station in the same market, along with expanding the number of TV stations a company is allowed to own nationally.

Now those Tribune waivers in Connecticut are no longer necessary, and the company can export its "synergy" revolution to other markets. Far from a victory for free speech, grassroots activists and

their political allies expect a wave of media mergers and acquisitions, cutting down the quantity of voices in the marketplace and the number of reporters scrutinizing power.

But if Tribune's "Connecticut portfolio" is the logical outcome of Powell's corporate-friendly brew, perhaps an antidote can be glimpsed in the same state. During the FCC proceedings, Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat, filed a brief in which he indicates the fight against media consolidation may move away from the FCC and Congress and into the courtroom. "Repeal of these rules would be a disservice to the nation and could require the attorneys general of individual states and other antitrust enforcement officials, to attempt to fill the void ... through costly and time-consuming processes, including litigation," Blumenthal wrote.

Imagine, an antitrust suit against the likes of Tribune, brought by a phalanx of attorneys general, reminiscent of the legal wars against Microsoft (in which Blumenthal participated). At this point, Blumenthal says he has not decided to move against any company, including Tribune. But his rumblings have media activists across the country listening. "I think it's a very important avenue to pursue," says Robert McChesney, a University of Illinois professor and co-author of *It's the Media, Stupid*. "Antitrust provisions have really deteriorated in their vitality in the last two decades. But the law hasn't changed—it's the way it has been enforced and interpreted that is much more business friendly."

Though a mega-lawsuit in the name of media diversity is enticing, victory would be far from certain, according to antitrust attorneys, as the path from violating the former FCC cross-ownership rules to illegal monopoly is not a smooth one. Just because a company owns a daily newspaper, an alternative weekly chain and two TV stations in a single geographic market—and just because that cross-ownership stifles the diversity of news available to consumers—doesn't mean the company will meet the criteria of a monopoly that restricts trade.

Antitrust violations hinge on how attorneys define a particular competitive market, says Phil Weiser, an associate professor of telecommunications and law at the University of Colorado Law School.

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

WHO WILL THE DEMOCRATS NOMINATE IN 2004?



RUDE AND AGGRESSIVE GOOFUS--



--OR CONSIDERATE, WELL-MANNERED GALLANT?

CANDIDATE GOOFUS CHALLENGES THE PRESIDENT'S RECORD ON TERRORISM!

--WHILE HE'S BEEN BUSY INVADING UNRELATED COUNTRIES AL QAEDA HAS REGROUPED--LEAVING US MORE VULNERABLE THAN EVER!



Goofus for President

CANDIDATE GALLANT POLITELY SUGGESTS WAYS IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT COULD DO AN EVEN BETTER JOB!

--AND SO, IF WE BEEF UP SECURITY AT CERTAIN ENTRY POINTS, WE'LL BE EVEN SAFER THAN WE ARE NOW!



Gallant for President

CANDIDATE GOOFUS REPEATEDLY BRINGS UP UNPLEASANT TOPICS SUCH AS ECONOMIC DEPRIVITY!

MILLIONS OF JOBS HAVE BEEN LOST--AND ALL GEORGE BUSH WANTS TO DO IS GIVE HIS RICH BUDDIES ANOTHER TAX CUT!



Goofus for President

CANDIDATE GALLANT DOESN'T WANT TO BE ACCUSED OF CLASS WARFARE!

I BELIEVE A PROGRAM OF MILD AND INCREMENTAL REFORM WILL EVENTUALLY MAKE THIS COUNTRY A SLIGHTLY BETTER PLACE THAN IT IS TODAY!



Gallant for

CANDIDATE GOOFUS TAKES CONTROL OF THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE--WITHOUT ASKING ANYONE'S PERMISSION!

PRESIDENT BUSH MUST ANSWER TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR THE COUNTLESS FAILURES OF HIS ADMINISTRATION!



Goofus for

CANDIDATE GALLANT RESPONDS TO EACH NEW REPUBLICAN ATTACK IN A PATIENT AND REASONABLE MANNER!

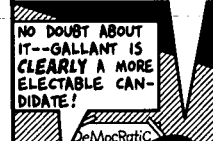
GOLLY, I SURE DON'T KNOW HOW THESE RUMORS GET STARTED--BUT I REALLY DON'T SPEND MY EVENINGS BURNING AMERICAN FLAGS WHILE MEMORIALIZING PASSAGES FROM DAS KAPITAL! HONEST!



Gallant for

SO WHO WILL THE DEMOCRATS SUPPORT?

GEE WHIZ--WE CAN'T RUN A MCGOVERNITE ELITIST LIKE GOOFUS!



NO DOUBT ABOUT IT--GALLANT IS CLEARLY A MORE ELECTABLE CANDIDATE!



STAY TUNED...

So if the defined market is newspapers, other properties like TV stations would be irrelevant in proving illegal market fixing.

Blumenthal acknowledges the difficulties. "Antitrust cases are far more complex and challenging than enforcement of cross-ownership rules, even though they seek to protect many of the same values," he says.

Another problem is political. Just how likely is it that Blumenthal can challenge a dominant media power and survive to tell the tale? "The chances a state attorney general would take this kind of case," McChesney says, "are about the same chances I would win the NBA slam dunk contest."

But Blumenthal isn't the only politician with antitrust on the brain. On May 21, Sen. Herb Kohl, a Democrat from Wisconsin, raised the issue in a Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing for Hew Pate, the Department of Justice's new antitrust chief. Kohl asked Pate for his views on the DOJ intervening in media mergers to protect diversity of voices, with Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) concurring. Competitive factors, not diversity factors, would drive any DOJ decisions, Pate responded.

Still, as the FCC moves along on its crusade, an antitrust suit becomes a "very credible threat," Weiser says. ■



Jesse Jackson and the PUSH coalition on June 2 in front of the FCC.

## Justice Denied

On May 7, Guatemala's Fourth Appeals Court overturned the conviction of Col. Juan Valencia for his role in masterminding the murder of anthropologist Myrna Mack in 1990. Valencia was convicted in a landmark trial in October 2002 (see "Justice in Guatemala," November 25, 2002), while two other officers were acquitted. Their acquittals were upheld by the court, and all three are now out of prison. Valencia's conviction was the first time a military officer was held responsible for ordering atrocities during Guatemala's 36-year civil war, which ended in 1996.

Since the end of the war, the military has continued to exert undue influence on Guatemalan courts. After the decision, Helen Mack, Myrna's sister and the driving force behind efforts to convict those guilty of the murder, told the Associated Press: "Here there was no justice." Mack intends to appeal the ruling.

A case against the Guatemalan government for its failure to provide justice in the Mack case is also pending before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, a judicial branch of the Organization of American States. A decision in that case is expected sometime this summer. —SB

## Peace Planning

More than 600 anti-war activists gathered at a downtown Chicago high school on May 31 to discuss next steps for a peace movement

unawed by the Bush administration's triumphalism over the war on Iraq.

The event, called "Peace and Justice Teach-In 2003," was characterized by cooperation between numerous organizing groups spouting very different political lines, and by conflict over a proposal for electoral strategy co-presented by Carl Davidson, a former president of Students for a Democratic Society, and veteran activist Marilyn Katz, an organizer of anti-war protests in Chicago.

Davidson, a steering committee member of Chicagoans Against War on Iraq, applauded the success of activist opposition to the U.S. attack on Iraq. Despite the outcome of the war, he told a workshop audience, "This is a magnificent movement we have built over the last three months."

Davidson challenged the peace movement to defeat George Bush electorally and build independent political strength. In the workshop and at a plenary ending the day-long teach-in, Davidson insisted anti-war groups that organized locally, building and maintaining their own databases of voters and financing their own efforts, could help defeat Bush's re-election campaign and still maintain a critical and effective distance from the eventual Democratic victor.

Many event participants will continue the debate at a national Anti-War Planning and Strategy Conference, organized by United for Peace and Justice, to be held in Chicago from June 6 to 8. —JE

BY SARA BERNDT  
AND JEFF EPTON

## Name Game

### Defense Department renames Total Information Awareness, does little else

By Francis Raven and Carolyn Kousky

A program out of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the central research and development organization of the Department of Defense, has once again made headlines. In a report published May 20, the Defense Department attempted to play down fears about a program so controversial, Congress halted funding to it in January.

Formerly known as Total Information Awareness, the newly renamed Terrorism

Information Awareness (TIA) program is the brainchild of Adm. John Poindexter, known for his 1991 conviction (later overturned) for lying to Congress about his involvement in the Iran-Contra affair.

The old name, DARPA notes on its Web site, "created in some minds the impression that TIA was a system to be used for developing dossiers on U.S. citizens." Luckily for DARPA, with the new name, they get to keep their acronym. Unluckily for privacy advocates, they kept much more than the acronym.

The TIA program is based on the idea that terrorists plotting an attack create an identifiable pattern of transactions, patterns that could be identified for early warning about possible threats. What this requires, and what TIA proposes, is a computer network enabling the government to "mine," or analyze, vast amounts of data on individuals, possibly including U.S. citizens.

The program has outraged privacy and civil liberties advocates on both the right and left. In January, Congress passed an amendment that blocked funding to the program until DARPA addressed privacy concerns and explained where funds for the program were going.

The TIA program is still in the development phase. It seeks to create fully functional software prototypes for the intelligence community to experiment with and then rapidly move into operational use. The report notes that the data used in testing will be either real "foreign intelligence and counterintelligence information that the federal government has already legally obtained ... or synthetic, wholly artificial information."

That is, for the moment they are not using databases solely made up of American citizens' information. But they might. The Department of Defense plans to use TIA tools on any database the govern-

## Hedges Head

There's very little that is liberal about liberal education these days, at least in the humanities. That's a lesson veteran *New York Times* war reporter Chris Hedges learned recently when he delivered the commencement address at a small liberal arts college in Illinois. Rockford College was in a pickle when Gov. Rod Blagojevich crapped out on a commitment to speak at the graduation ceremony. So, acting on the advice of a speakers' bureau, the college invited Hedges, whose recent book, *War is a Force that Gives us Meaning*, takes a scathingly critical look at war and war reporting.

"I want to speak to you today about war and empire," Hedges began from the dais. Everything went south from there. As Hedges made his case against the war in Iraq, angry members of the audience began hissing and booing and blowing off foghorns. Some started singing "God Bless America" while others disconnected his microphone. The mike was recon-

ected and disconnected again. Audience members approached the dais to challenge Hedges and in short order he was hustled away by campus security.

There were some in the audience who cheered Hedges, and the college's president did his best to bring the audience to heel. But the judgment of this middle American town was best summed up in a headline in the *Rockford Register Star*: "Speaker disrupts RG graduation."

## Hot Time in the Jungle

Colombian soldiers hit the jackpot in May, when they stumbled on \$9 million in a rebel cache they overran, according to the Associated Press. Rather than turn their prize over to their superiors, two army companies split the booty among themselves. Colombian authorities are calling it behavior unbecoming of soldiers, but the shopkeepers, bartenders and pimps of the town of Popayan

might term it a most agreeable kind of Keynesianism. Soldiers brought us everything in sight, from new cars and televisions to four day rings in pea porcelains.

Forty-five soldiers have been arrested, but more than a hundred are at large. Meanwhile, a national debate has erupted as to whether the soldiers should be allowed to keep at least some of the loot.

## Defining Deviance Up

Sex education is under siege in the town of Lakewood, Colorado. According to the Associated Press, police there busted a night spot called the Labyrinth after someone turned in a flyer advertising a rave orgy at the

club. In a couple of undercover visits, cops caught various kinds of kink being enacted for patrons, so they shut the place down. The town's got laws against cabarets, many in town hailed the bust as a victory for decency. But the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom demurs. "This is not adult entertainment," a spokeswoman said. "It's very important that there are zoning categories that allow for a space like this where people can get the education they need to do SM (sadomasochism) and fetish safely. They need to get lessons."





ment has lawful access to—including passports and visas, drivers' licenses, airline ticket purchases, and arrests.

Many of the programs under the Information Awareness Office, the arm of the Defense Department that houses TIA, seem, to the technologically illiterate, near impossible, like something from a science fiction novel. The Genisys Program, for example, seeks to develop database architecture that eliminates the "need to know where information resides or how it is structured in multiple databases."

Human Identification at a Distance, another program in development, seeks to develop the technological capacity "to identify humans as unique individuals ... at a distance, at any time of the day or night, during all weather conditions, with non-cooperative subjects, possibly disguised and alone or in groups." In short, the program hopes to uniquely identify individuals based on their gait and posture. Information from both these programs may be provided to TIA.

The Secretary of Defense has established an advisory committee that will focus on privacy issues raised by the TIA program, and May's report emphasizes strongly, several times, that the TIA program will be conducted in accordance "with existing laws, regulations, and policies." It also says the TIA program does not recommend changing current laws related to data collection and use.

Whether this is comforting to the public may depend on how they view current legislation, including the relatively new Patriot Act, which allows federal law enforcement to monitor the books Americans buy and check out of the library. But there are few existing "legal constraints on government access to commercial databases," according to the Center for Democracy and Technology. Businesses might even be willing to hand over information: A survey conducted by CSO Magazine in 2002 found that 41 percent of businesses were willing to share information with the government without a court order if national security were at

stake. Less than half said they would release information only under a subpoena or court order.

The new report has attempted to address privacy concerns, but the ACLU and other privacy groups are still concerned. TIA data mining efforts would have unprecedented power, they say, and the program would aggregate large amounts of information, doing away with a certain amount of "practical obscurity" that has protected personally identifiable and sensitive information for some time. This raises red flags for many people, especially because there has been no detailed plan for how the managers of the TIA program could prevent unauthorized access and unauthorized use of the system. There is also no mechanism for correcting inaccurate information, or for any form of public accountability.

The TIA program may have changed its name, and some of its more alarming attributes may have been measured, but privacy and civil liberties advocates are far from placated. ■

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## Le Résistance

Under right-wing reform,  
strikes spread across France

By Megan Rowling

PERPIGNAN, FRANCE—"He who doesn't listen to the streets is deaf to democracy," warns a huge banner draped across the city council building in this village in southern France. It's a message French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin heard loud and clear over several weeks in May, as hundreds of thousands of teachers, bureaucrats, and postal, transport, and medical workers went on strike across the country to protest government plans for reforming the state education and pension systems.

On this sunny day in late May, several thousand teachers, students, parents and kids marched through Perpignan, voicing their anger at moves to decentralize schools and universities and make public sector employees work longer before retirement. It's a scene that has been repeated regularly. The number of demonstrators vary, but the slogans remain the same: "Education Is a Right, Not a Market" and "Save Our Retirement." At the university, students found the gates barricaded and end-of-year exams postponed. This provincial college has seen some of the most militant action in France, its staff fearing that proposals to give universities more autonomy will lead to policies favoring larger establishments.

After several weeks of protest, they achieved a small victory: Raffarin's center-right government decided to delay drawing up legislation on education reform until the autumn. But many teachers doubt that ministers are prepared to negotiate on the main principles of their decentralization project. Further, the government's refusal to back down on pensions has infuriated some of the country's most powerful unions. On May 28, the day the cabinet approved pension reform proposals described by President Jacques Chirac as "urgent" and "just," four of those unions appealed to workers to step up their mobilization against the government. "Only a broadening of the movement," they said in a statement, "in both the public and private sectors, which stays the course, can force the government to turn back from its disastrous choices."



Hundreds of thousands went on strike in France in May to protest the government.

Bruno Palier, a researcher at the Center for the Study of French Political Life, describes the government's tactics as "very clumsy." He points out that, earlier this year, unions had agreed the pension system needed more funds to make up for the big shortfalls expected in coming decades. But to achieve this, their preference was to boost employment and increase the burden on employers—measures the government has rejected in favor of bringing the number of years public employees must work in line with the private sector. "The government said it wanted reform," says Palier, "but when it received the unions, it didn't say exactly what it planned to do until afterwards. Neither has the government been clear about the impact of the changes. People won't accept sacrifice without knowing what is going on. There is no sense that the government is listening."

Despite the widespread popularity of Chirac's opposition to the war in Iraq, the government's perceived arrogance on domestic policy has dented its approval ratings in the polls. Many left-wing voters are still bitter about last year's presidential elections, when out-of-touch Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin lost heavily in the first round. Given a choice between the far-right nationalist policies of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Chirac's center-right platform, they opted for the lesser of two evils. But as Palier explains, the result was that, "One and a half months later, Chirac's party had a real majority in the

National Assembly and interpreted that as a mandate for strong government."

France's socialists now feel betrayed, regarding plans for "reform" and "decentralization" as a route to the back-door privatization of public services. This underlying fear is the driving force behind the current wave of protest. "The general perception among unions and the working population is that, in the name of the European Union and business competitiveness, the government wants to do away with social protection," says Jean-Francois Merçier, an economist at Citigroup. "And there is very strong resistance to that. In France, you can't get away with a sudden switch to a social and economic system like that of the United States or Britain."

Most analysts agree that, unless France's present social conflict snowballs into a crippling general strike, it is unlikely to lead to the immediate downfall of the government. The key question is whether the Socialist Party can regroup and form credible policy alternatives in time to prevent a further splintering of the left. Palier fears not. "I hope that all sides in today's impasse can find a solution which allows them to think they have won something. Because what is happening now is good for Le Pen and the National Front. It seems that each successive government is simply moving against the people, and only one party [the National Front] is speaking for the people. And when governments don't listen, people end up voting for extremists." ■



# Nuclear Cowboys in the White House

**D**r. Helen Caldicott, one of the foremost peace activists of our time, is co-founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility and Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND, now Women's Action for New Directions). She is also the author of five books, most recently *The New Nuclear Danger: George W. Bush's Military-Industrial Complex*. Caldicott spoke with *In These Times* from Salt Lake City.

**You have characterized the first Gulf War as the United States' second nuclear war because of the use of depleted uranium (DU) weapons. What's your take on military action in Iraq?**

It's the third [nuclear war]. Well, actually it's not, because they used uranium weapons in Kosovo and in Afghanistan, so actually it's the fifth.

**Some consider DU weapons to be in violation of the Geneva Convention because they are "indiscriminate weapons"—that is, they do not distinguish between civilians and combatants.**

They also leave a radioactive battlefield for the rest of time. This is a gross violation of the Geneva Convention, but more than that, from a medical perspective—I'm a pediatrician—it is just almost unbelievable that they would use these weapons in an indiscriminate way.

My friend, the late Adm. Gene Carroll, of the Center for Defense Information, said, "Helen, our mission in the Pentagon is to destroy property and to kill people." Clearly it is, and that takes my breath away. I mean, haven't we evolved beyond the primitive notion of killing? If we haven't moved away from the primitive notion of killing—and we clearly haven't—we'll destroy life on Earth. We're heading rapidly in that direction.

**You saw some major victories in the '80s and at the end of the Cold War. What happened to the "peace dividend"?**

If you read my new book, the whole story's in there. Nothing's changed since the '80s. Well, two things have changed. One, nobody knows the weapons are there, whereas in the '80s at least we were all worried and scared about it. And two, we've got nuclear cowboys

in the White House who say that they will use nuclear weapons on any country they so desire [regardless of whether the country has nuclear capability or not]. Now that's a totally new concept in the history of the United States.

**What's the status of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, which is a group you've set up to provide education about nuclear weapons and power programs?**

We're just setting ourselves up now. The pain in the neck is you have to raise money. The federal government should be funding me because I'm trying to save life on the planet—I'm a conservative. Anyone who has notions to use nuclear weapons is a radical!

We've opened an office in D.C. located among all the right-wing think tanks that I want to take on. We're in the process of hiring a communications director so that we can get ourselves and all the wonderful scientists around the country on television to negate what Rumsfeld, et al. say.

**Fundraising for progressive organizations is always difficult, but it is especially tough in the current economic climate.**

Yeah. But I'm getting the money. There are a lot of wealthy people in this country who care deeply about the status quo at the moment. I will get the money for sure. Rosie O'Donnell just gave me \$100,000.

**What about some of the more insidious ways that nuclear terror has entered our lives, such as leaky power plants?**

The power plants routinely vent gasses every second of every day and routinely pollute the cooling water, and then you get bioconcentration of the radioisotopes in the food chain. And nuclear power plants are targets for ter-

rorists. They don't need nuclear weapons; they're deployed all over the country in the form of 103 reactors. So the American people are in grave danger.

My goal with the Institute is to end the nuclear age in five years—to close down all reactors in five years and to abolish nuclear weapons between Russia and America, and then all the other nuclear nations will step into line and do the same thing. Russia's ready. It's America that's holding up that process. We nearly got there at the end of the '80s, so I plan to finish the work. It's a work in process.

**Do scientists have to check their humanity at the door when they enter a laboratory to work on nuclear weapons or cluster bombs?**

All the people who build these cluster bombs or uranium bombs check their humanity at the door. They've sold their souls like Faust.

**How do we change their minds?**

I once spoke at Sandia Labs, a major defense contractor, and there were thousands of scientists there. I told them they should leave their jobs, that they shouldn't be doing this work that could destroy life on our planet. They lined up in queues afterward to ask me questions, and they said, looking behind them, "That was terrific—those people here needed to hear that."

**You've sacrificed a lot for your work.**

I have, really. I've sacrificed my life. Because my vocation is medicine, it's like being a nun. And I've had to give that up. I really resent it because I think I only get one go at this life, and if we had eliminated nuclear weapons at least I would feel like my life's been worthwhile. At the moment I don't [feel that way], and that's why I'm really determined to finish the work before I die. ■

**Thomas P. Healy** is a freelance writer in Indianapolis.



Dr. Helen Caldicott

# Neocon Convergences

By Salim Muwakkil

A funny thing happened while following the money trail of the neo-conservatives who have hijacked U.S. foreign policy. The path led to a network of financial and intellectual resources that also is dedicated to neoracism.

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation has been the economic fount for the neoconservative notions of global affairs now ascendant in the Bush administration. According to a report by Media Transparency, from 1995 to 2001 the Milwaukee-based foundation provided about \$14.5 million to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the think tank most responsible for incubating and nourishing the ideas of the neocon movement.

The Bradley Foundation also made grants totaling nearly \$1.8 million to help fund the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), the influential group that had urged an invasion of Iraq since its 1997 founding. PNAC, headed by *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol, boasts a membership that includes many players in the Bush administration, including Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.

The Bradley foundation also helped fund Samuel P. Huntington's neocon classic *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, a book that brought the domestic culture wars to the global stage. Hitting a familiar, Eurocentric note, Huntington's book argued that the Judeo-Christian "West" is the protagonist in an epic struggle of civilizations against the "other" (this time the Islamic East). For a group that supposedly has left Marxist thinking behind, these neoconservatives are rigidly dialectic.

All of this wouldn't much alarm me; after all, the battlefield of ideas is as good a place to fight as any. But then I began to notice other beneficiaries of Bradley's largess since 1995, and I found some troubling patterns. The foundation has provided nearly \$2 million to the National Association of Scholars, which played a key role in the anti-affirmative action campaign known as the Californian Civil Rights Initiative and regularly questions

black-oriented scholarship. It has also given \$1.8 million to help fund the Madison Center for Educational Affairs, a group that provides guidance and support for 70 right-wing campus papers across the country.

The Bradley Foundation seems to have a soft spot in its heart for the kind of neoracist ideas that have gained currency in recent



years. It has heavily subsidized authors like Charles Murray and Dinesh D'Souza, whose work on welfare and race has reinforced ancient stereotypes. Murray's book *Losing Ground* argued that poverty is the result of personal failings and thus most government anti-poverty programs should be eliminated. And his book *The Bell Curve* (written with Harvard psychologist Richard Herrnstein) argued that poverty is the result of genetic traits of a subclass of human beings. These arguments were deployed to help convince conservative legislators of the futility of affirmative action and other compensatory social programs. After all, if African-Americans are genetically incapable of achieving racial equality, we must rethink the goals of the civil rights movement.

David Horowitz, one of neoconservatism's most incendiary racial provocateurs, has raked in nearly \$4.5 million in grants from the Bradley Foundation for his think tank, the Center for the Study of Popular Culture. Horowitz's combative tactics seem designed to ratchet up tensions between blacks and Jews, a theme that seems to be a Bradley favorite.

It's clear to me that the Bradley Foundation has forged a link between a neo-

imperialist foreign policy and a neoracist domestic policy, and that it provides generous funding to push these views in both realms. And Bradley is just one of other like-minded foundations such as the Koch Family Foundation, the John M. Olin Foundation, the Scaife Family Foundation, and the Adolph Coors Foundation, groups examined in the report "Buying a Movement: Right Wing Foundations and American Politics," by People for the American Way.

The link that connects these views is the notion that Western civilization is both the global ideal and the world's official arbiter. It's an old notion: white supremacy unhinged—the same notion that justified the original imperialism and slavery. What's particularly troubling to me is the lack of domestic concern about this connection. Did the world not reach a consensus on the dangers of racist reasoning and military aggression following World War II?

That neocons are galvanized by race is no surprise. One of the founding documents of neoconservatism is Norman Podhoretz's 1963 essay "My Negro Problem—and Ours." In that famous *Commentary* essay, Podhoretz's comments helped create a gap between blacks and Jews that has yet to be bridged. Among other things, he

**The Bradley Foundation is the right's economic fount for ideas promoting neoracist empire.**

suggested that the solution to America's racial problem would be for blacks to accept miscegenation as an unobtrusive form of genocide.

Victims of these evils see the link between neo-imperialism and neoracism much more easily than the victimizers. And they fear this axis of evil much more than the one concocted by Bush's speech writers. That's likely one reason black Americans resisted overwhelming media propaganda and opposed the Iraq invasion. The funding priorities of the Bradley Foundation show those fears are not misplaced. ■



# Needed: A Vast Liberal Conspiracy

By Ana Marie Cox

**F**or all the indoctrination going on—you know, gay recruitment, media bias, and liberal professor brainwashing—it's awfully hard to find the central headquarters for the side that supposedly won the culture war. Believe me, I've tried.

I know the right has recruitment centers and even training programs for young people interested in joining—and possibly leading—the conservative movement. There's the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), which funds dozens of conservative college papers and several full-tuition scholarships in addition to running a speakers' bureau and various conferences for future conservative leaders. Recipients of the ISI's largess include Larry Arnn, the current president of Hillsdale College, as well as younger conservative leaders like Marc Theissen, who edited the ISI-sponsored *Vassar Spectator* and until recently was an aide to Jesse Helms.

The Arlington, Virginia-based Leadership Institute, meanwhile, has an alumni list that reads like a Fox News guest roster: anti-campaign finance reform crusader Senator Mitch McConnell, tax-slashing strategist Grover "starve the state" Norquist, and Ralph Reed have all attended one of the organization's various programs (which include "Effective Television Techniques"—parts I and II, mind you—and "Candidate Development").

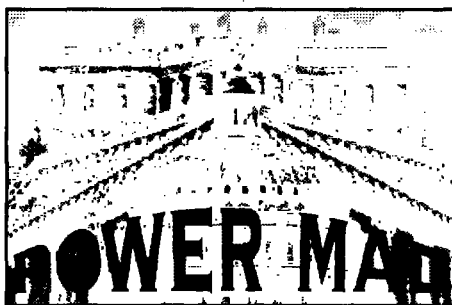
All this from the side of the aisle that claims to be under siege from "liberal media elites." If the left controls the culture, shouldn't there be some place where we go to learn how to do this?

In order to find out, I first did what any college student looking for information would do: I searched the Web. Using Google, first I tried "liberal leadership training," which produced mostly a selection of liberal arts colleges course catalogs. Then I tried "progressive leadership training," which scored a direct hit! Alas, [www.progressiveleadership.com](http://www.progressiveleadership.com) is not the left's answer to ISI, but rather "an international executive coaching and leadership development firm."

The more motivated student might actually, say, pick up the phone or thumb through lefty magazines. Where would this

take our hypothetical young would-be progressive leader? "That's a very good question," says Nick Penniman, a youngish progressive leader himself and the executive editor of TomPaine.com. "It's sad, actually. There's no clear overarching organization."

Let's be clear: Part of the reason it's more difficult to find liberal leadership training is that there is less money floating in liberal coffers. But some sources of funding do



exist: The Florence Fund gave TomPaine.com, for instance, \$2 million. The Tides Foundation regularly hands out grants of tens of thousands of dollars to groups such as Adbusters magazine and NORML. There's some money out there: Won't someone use it to train progressive leaders?

Hans Riemer, the Washington director of Rock the Vote, suggests that a search for "progressive leadership training" was not, perhaps, focused enough. He advises looking for "environmental leadership training" or "feminist leadership training," and, sure enough, this produces results. If you want to save the earth or protect reproductive rights, you can sign up with the Green Corps' Field School or the Feminist Leadership Institute.

This is heartening, and yet it also feels like a symptom of a larger problem: the chronic homelessness of many would-be progressive leaders. Activists with a liberal bent seem to instinctively distrust institutions that are directly connected to the dominant system. "It's almost bred into you," Riemer says. "You're taught that party politics are evil and you don't have any leaders that you're really excited about. You just sort of focus on your cause."

The conservative movement doesn't suffer from this split between an "activist" wing and a political wing: They are one and the same. The success that such right-wing activists as Reed and Norquist have had in actually formulating government policy begs the question of their counterparts in the Democratic Party: Who thinks Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Global Exchange, will be advising senators on the draft of the next trade bill? Could Eli Pariser, the director of the progressive coalition MoveOn.org, be a successful campaign consultant?

The Democrats have shunned liberal activists on the theory that all major elections hinge on a sliver of undecided centrist voters. This leads to centrist candidates who, to inquisitive voters, appear indecisive. Recently, the Democratic Leadership Council, self-appointed party strategists of the 2004 election, underlined this point by launching an attack on former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean. Until he distinguished himself by opposing the invasion of Iraq, Dean was himself a DLC

**For the conservatives, the activist wing and the political wing are one and the same.**

poster boy—he's the only Democratic candidate, for instance, to earn an A rating from the National Rifle Association. Lately, however, he's built upon the groundswell of support that greeted his Iraq statements with further attacks on the more mainstream candidates, declaring himself to be "from the Democratic wing of the Democratic party."

In full responsible-adult scold mode, the DLC denounced Dean as being from the "McGovern-Mondale wing" of the party, "the wing that ... transformed Democrats from a strong national party into a much weaker regional one." In other words, while the available supply of trained liberal leaders continues to dwindle, the party long associated with liberal reform now seems bent on wiping out the demand for them as well.

There's the vast liberal conspiracy: All dressed down, with no place to go. ■



By Joel Bleifuss

## Weaponsgate

Finally, the scandal of the Bush administration using cooked intelligence to con the American public into a war with Iraq is getting the attention it deserves. The CIA has said it will investigate the use of bad intelligence. And, intelligence community dissenters are speaking out more forcefully than ever.

In an interview with *All Things Considered*, former CIA analyst Larry Johnson, a self-described Republican, said his former colleagues told him the CIA had concluded Iraq did not pose a threat to the United States, with regards to weapons of mass destruction, but that the CIA's attempt to get their analysis considered by the administration was "thwarted" by the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans (OSP). The OSP is the command center of a group of followers of political philosopher Leo Strauss, who—half-jokingly, but wholly in earnest—refer to themselves as the Cabal.

Johnson, saying it appears "Bush is being misled deliberately" by the OSP, is calling for a congressional investigation. "These individuals that have been operating out of the Office of Special Plans at the Department of Defense, I think, represent a clear and present danger to the United States," he says.

## Embedded Journalism

One of the problems mainstream news organizations now face is how to cover this story, without acknowledging that they themselves have been the prime purveyors of misleading information in the debate over the war in Iraq.

For example, internal *New York Times* e-mails provide convincing evidence that



In the Shahikot Mountains of southeastern Afghanistan, U.S. soldiers watch over a prisoner who was bagged and tagged on June 2 during "Operation Dragon Fury."

the *Times* has been misled by an OSP-orchestrated disinformation campaign.

The e-mails, leaked to *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz, reveal that Ahmad Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress and ally of the Pentagon hard liners in the OSP, was the man the *Times* turned to for confirmation on Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. The communications in question focus on a turf squabble between John Burns, the Baghdad bureau chief, and Judith Miller, the paper's reporter for bioterrorism. In response to a chastisement by Burns over her use of Chalabi as a source, Miller wrote, "I've been covering Chalabi for about 10 years, and have done most of the stories about him for our paper, including the long takeout we recently did on him. He has provided most of the front page exclusives on WMD to our paper."

## Embedded McCarthyism

Writing under the *nom de plume* of Jackson Thoreau, a Texas journalist has created a roster of journalists who, transgressing conventional media wisdom, opposed the Bush Administration's war in Iraq and were fired. Everyone has heard of how MSNBC sacked Phil Donahue, but consider the following cases.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* fired Henry Norr, its technology columnist, for marching in a demonstration against the war.

In Oregon, the *Grants Pass Daily Courier* sacked Dan Guthrie for a column in which he described Bush as "hiding in a Nebraska hole" rather than returning to Washington after 9/11.

The *Texas City Sun* fired city editor Tom Gutting for writing that Bush "was flying around the country like a scared child seeking refuge in his mother's bed after having a nightmare."

Ed Gernon, a veteran TV producer, was fired by the company that produced *Hitler*, a CBS mini-series, after he told *TV Guide*: "It basically boils down to an entire nation gripped by fear, [that] ultimately chose to give up their civil rights and plunge the whole nation into war. I can't think of a better time to examine this history than now."

NBC dismissed Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent Peter Arnett for granting an interview with Iraqi television in which he said that the Pentagon had "misjudged the determination of the Iraqi forces" and that there was "a growing challenge to President Bush about the conduct of the war."

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* fired Steve McLinden after he sent a private



e-mail to Young Conservatives of Texas, in response to a mass e-mail that promoted a demonstration against Bill Clinton, who was to speak in Austin in February. (The Young Conservatives of Texas had previously labeled affirmative action "anti-white" and filed complaints against Texas hospitals that provide care to undocumented immigrants.) McLinden wrote, "Ah, the heartless, greedy, anti-intellectual little fascists are mobilizing again. Let me guess. All you frat boys saved up your allowances and monies from your McDonald's jobs for those Beemers you'll be driving to the protest, and those new jackboots you'll be sportin' en route. Hey, don't forget all the nasty little deals that Reagan's henchmen cut with Middle East figures that got us directly into this mess today. I'm sure you'll be protesting the Reagan household any day now."

The Young Conservatives of Texas publicized McLinden's e-mail. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* promptly fired McLinden and apologized to the Young Conservatives of Texas.

### Crockatoa

Why are Muslims in Indonesia so darn fanatic? Geological determinism, according to George Will.

In a recent column, Will traces the origins of Islamic fundamentalism to the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883, which killed more than 36,000 people. "Krakatoa, by terrifying and dispossessing people, may have catalyzed the much fiercer form of Islam that fused with anti-colonialism. It is alive and dealing death today," spews Will.

Yes, catastrophic events can catalyze national mood swings. Just look how 9/11 led to a nationwide hysteria. Millions of Americans have lost their better judgment and joined ranks with Will. But Krakatoa erupted 120 years ago. Perhaps the anti-Western fanaticism in Indonesia is better explained by more recent events. For example, the CIA-backed coup against Sukarno in 1965, which led to a bloodbath that the CIA itself termed "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century." The coup was followed by Suharto's 30 years of misrule, during which Indonesians suffered under a corrupt dictatorship and the people of East Timor (except for the 100,000 who were slaughtered in 1975) were brutally repressed as the United States looked the other way.

### Stop Floridation

Martin Luther King III and Greg Palast have teamed up to prevent the "Floridation" of the nation's voting rolls in the 2004 presidential election.

King, the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Council, and Palast, the author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, are circulating an open letter to Attorney General John Ashcroft that protests the so-called Help America Vote Act, passed by Congress in 2002. The act requires all states to follow Florida's lead and by 2004 set up centralized, computerized voter files of the kind that allowed Florida Secretary of State Kathleen Harris to selectively purge Florida's voting rolls of those voting while black, or Democrat.

The letter to Ashcroft reads, in part:

This is the very system which the state of Florida used to remove tens of thousands of eligible African-American and Hispanic voters from voter registries before the Presidential election of 2000. ... We, the undersigned, hereby demand that NO voter be purged from centralized voter rolls without proof positive that the voter is ineligible. We also demand a halt to further computerization of balloting until such methods are made unsusceptible to political manipulation, fraud, and racial bias.

To sign this petition, go to [www.workingforchange.org](http://www.workingforchange.org).

### Making Votes Countable

In response to the potential for election rigging that could be enabled by the Help America Vote Act, Rep. Rush Holt (D-N.J.) has introduced a bill in Congress requiring a voter-verifiable paper trail, The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2003 (see <http://holt.house.gov>).

"We cannot afford nor can we permit another major assault on the integrity of the American electoral process," says Holt. "Imagine it's Election Day 2004.



Robbie Conal's poster of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney is available, signed by the artist, for \$25 at the Center for the Study of Political Graphics Web site, [www.politicalgraphics.org](http://www.politicalgraphics.org).

You enter your local polling place and go to cast your vote on a brand new 'touch screen' voting machine. The screen says your vote has been counted. As you exit the voting booth, however, you begin to wonder. How do I know if the machine actually recorded my vote? The fact is, you don't."

### Green Party Plans, 2004

The Green Party is currently having an internal debate on how to approach the 2004 elections. "Most Greens are debating who to run and how to run, not whether to run," says National Green Party co-chair Ben Manski of Madison, Wisconsin. Many Greens are advocating a presidential campaign strategy that avoids battleground states, and concentrates on running in states where the election won't be close. And some are suggesting that the party not completely rule out endorsing a non-Green candidate, i.e., a Democrat, as Election Day approaches. ■

# Seize the Time

In these times, when we have to race to keep abreast of the speed at which our freedoms are being snatched from us, and when few can afford the luxury of separating from the streets for a while in order to return with the exquisite, fully formed political thesis replete with footnotes and references, what gift can I offer you?

As we lurch from crisis to crisis, beamed directly into our brains by satellite TV, we have to think on our feet. On the move. We enter histories through the rubble of war. Ruined cities, parched fields, shrinking forests, and dying rivers are our archives, craters left by daisy cutters, our libraries.

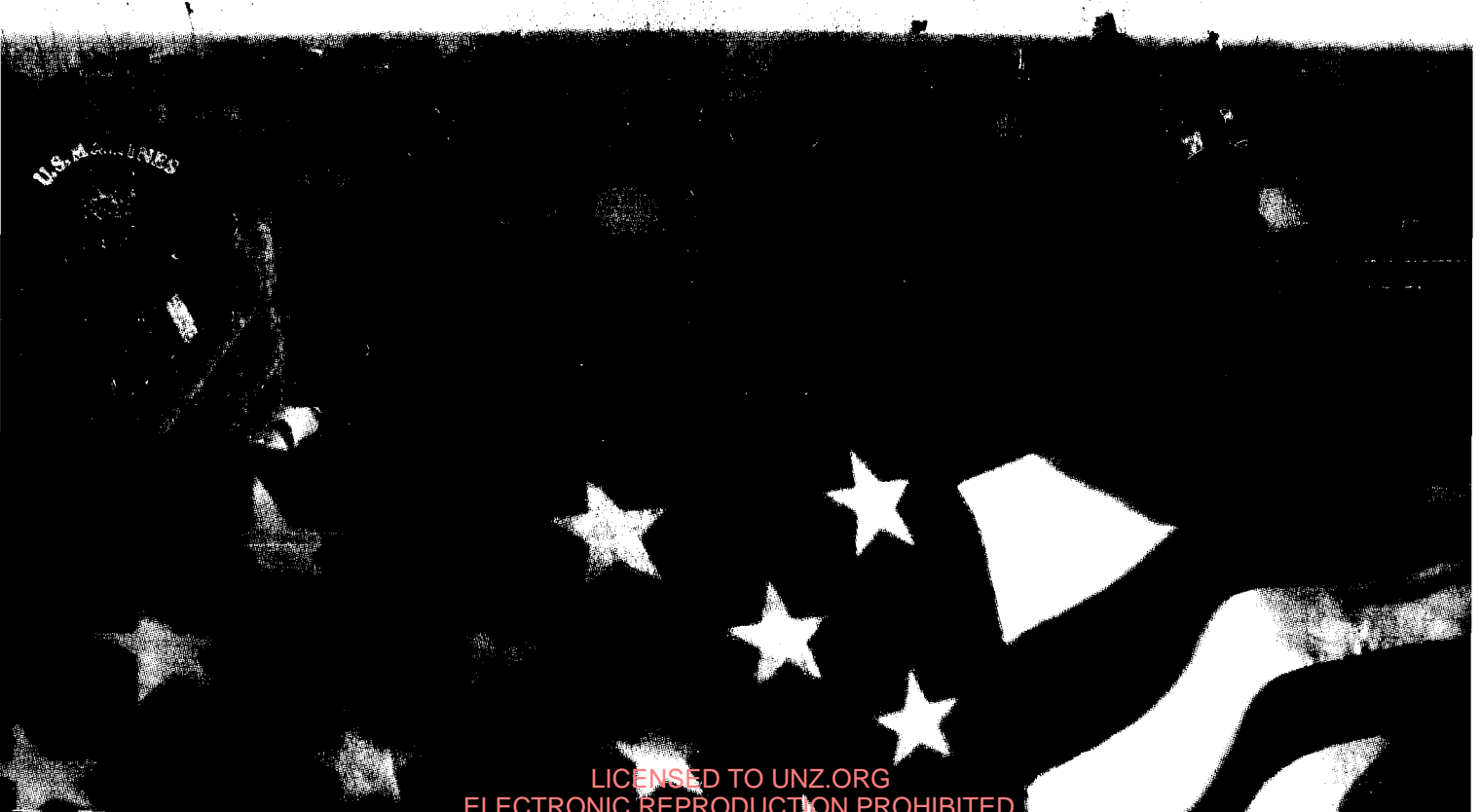
So, what can I offer you? Some uncomfortable thoughts about money, war, empire, racism and democracy. Some worries that flit around my brain like a family of persistent moths that keep me awake at night.

You may think it is bad manners for a person like me, officially entered in the Big Book of Modern Nations as an "alien citizen," to come here and criticize the U.S. government. Speaking for myself, I'm no flag-waver, no patriot, and am fully aware that venality, brutality and hypocrisy are imprints on the leaden soul of every state. But when a country ceases to be merely a country and becomes an empire, then the scale of operations changes dramatically. So may I clarify that I speak as a subject of the American Empire? I speak as a slave who presumes to criticize her king.

Way back in 1988, on the 3rd of July, the U.S.S. Vincennes, a missile cruiser stationed in the Persian Gulf, accidentally shot down an Iranian airliner and killed 290 civilian passengers. George Bush the First, who was, at the time, on his presidential campaign, was asked to comment on the incident. He said quite subtly, "I will never apologize for the United States. I don't care what the facts are."

I don't care what the facts are. What a perfect maxim for the New American Empire. Perhaps a slight variation on the theme would be more appropriate: The facts can be whatever we want them to be. When the United States invaded Iraq, a *New York Times*/CBS News survey estimated that 42 percent of the American public believed that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. And an ABC News poll said that 55 percent of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein directly supported al-Qaeda.

None of this opinion is based on evidence (because there isn't any). And it's based on insinuation, auto-suggestion, and outright lies circulated by the U.S. corporate media, otherwise known as the news press, that hollow pillar on which contemporary American democracy rests. The era of manufacturing consent has given way to the era of manufacturing news. Soon media newsrooms will drop the pretense and start hiring theater directors instead of journalists. And as America's show business gets more violent and war-like, America's wars get more like show business. The designer who built



# ARUNDHATI ROY

## CHARTS

### A STRATEGY AGAINST EMPIRE

the \$250,000 set in Qatar from which Gen. Tommy Franks stage-managed news coverage of Operation Shock and Awe also built sets for Disney, MGM and Good Morning America.

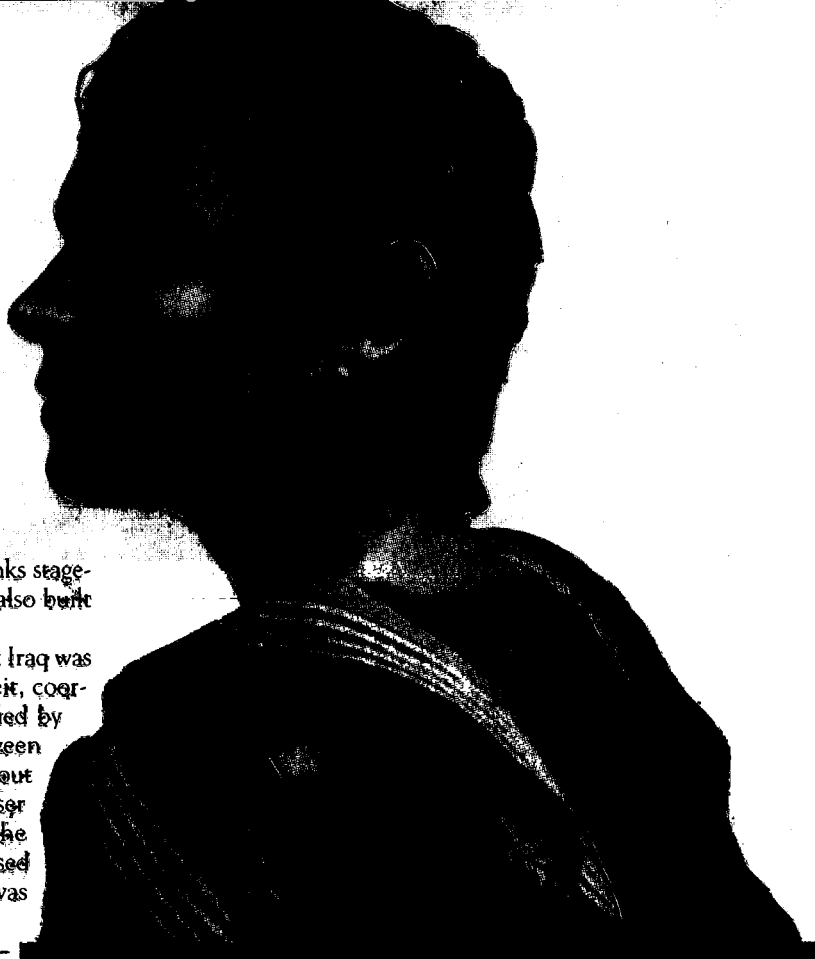
Public support in the United States for the war against Iraq was founded on a multi-tiered edifice of falsehood and deceit, coordinated by the U.S. government and faithfully amplified by the corporate media. Apart from the invented links between Iraq and al-Qaeda, we had the manufactured frenzy about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. George Bush the Lesser went to the extent of saying it would be "suicidal" for the United States not to attack Iraq. We once again witnessed the paranoia that a starved, bombed, besieged country was about to annihilate almighty America.

Iraq was only the latest in a succession of countries—earlier there was Cuba, Nicaragua, Libya, Grenada and Panama. But this time it wasn't just your ordinary brand of friendly neighborhood frenzy. It was Frenzy with a Purpose. It ushered in an old doctrine in a new bottle: The Doctrine of Pre-emptive Strike, i.e., the United States Can Do Whatever the Hell It Wants, and That's Official. Meanwhile, in passing, an ancient civilization has been casually decimated by a very recent, casually brutal nation.

**A**ttorney General John Ashcroft recently declared that U.S. freedoms are "not the grant of any government or document, but ... our endowment from God." Why bother with the United Nations when God himself is on hand?

So here we are, the people of the world, confronted with an empire armed with a mandate from heaven (and, as added insurance, the most formidable arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in history). Here we are, confronted with an empire that has conferred upon itself the right to go to war at will, and the right to deliver people from corrupting ideologies, from religious fundamentalists, dictators, sexism, and poverty by the age-old, tried-and-tested practice of extermination. Empire is on the move, and "Democracy" is its sly new war cry. Democracy, home-delivered to your doorstep by daisy cutters. Death is a small price for people to pay for the privilege of sampling this new product. Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy: bring to a boil, add oil, then bomb.

Before the war on Iraq began, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) sent the Pentagon a list of 16 crucial sites to protect. The National Museum was second on that list. Yet the museum was not just looted, it was desecrated.



#### Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy:

#### Bring to a boil, add oil, then bomb.

It was a repository of an ancient cultural heritage. Iraq as we know it today was part of the river valley of Mesopotamia. The civilization that grew along the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates produced the world's first writing, first calendar, first library, first city, and, yes, the world's first democracy. King Hammurabi of Babylon was the first to codify laws governing the social life of citizens. It was a code in which abandoned women, prostitutes, slaves, and even animals had rights. The Hammurabi code is acknowledged not just as the birth of legality, but the beginning of an understanding of the concept of social justice. The U.S. government could not have chosen a more inappropriate land in which to stage its illegal war and display its grotesque disregard for justice.

Democracy, the modern world's holy cow, is in crisis. And the crisis is profound. Every kind of outrage is being committed in the name of democracy. Democracy has become little more than a hollow word, a pretty shell, emptied of all content or meaning. It can be whatever you want it to be. Democracy is the Free World's whore, willing to dress up, dress down, willing to satisfy a whole range of taste, available to be used and abused at will.

Democracy did once seem as though it might actually succeed in delivering a degree of real social justice. But modern democracies have been around for long enough for neoliberal capitalists to learn how to subvert them. They have mastered the technique of infiltrating the instruments of democracy—

On March 18, 2003, U.S. Marines of Task Force Tarawa prepare vehicles in Kuwait for the invasion of Iraq.



"You have a rich tradition of resistance," says Roy. At left, an anti-war rally in Washington, April 12, 2003.

American economy has lost more than 2 million jobs. Outlandish military expenses, corporate welfare, and tax giveaways to the rich have created a financial crisis for the U.S. educational system. According to a survey by the National Council of State Legislatures, U.S. states cut \$49 billion in public services, health, welfare benefits, and education in 2002. They plan to cut another \$25.7 billion this year. That makes a total of \$75 billion. Bush's initial budget request to Congress to finance the war in Iraq was \$80 billion.

**S**o who's paying for the war? America's poor. Its students, its unemployed, its single mothers, its hospital and home-care patients, its teachers, and health workers. And who will benefit from it? Who is homing in on the reconstruction contracts worth up to \$100 billion? Could it be America's poor and unemployed and sick? Could it be America's single mothers? Or America's black and Latino minorities?

Operation Iraqi Freedom, George Bush assures us, is about returning Iraqi oil to the Iraqi people. That is, returning Iraqi oil to the Iraqi people via Bechtel, Chevron and Halliburton. Once again, it is a small, tight circle that connects corporate, military, and government leadership to one another. The promiscuousness, the cross-pollination, is outrageous. Consider this: The Defense Policy Board is a government-appointed group that advises the Pentagon. Its members are appointed by the under-secretary of defense and approved by Donald Rumsfeld. Its meetings are classified. No information is available for public scrutiny.

The Washington-based Center for Public Integrity found that 9 out of the 30 members of the Defense Policy Board are connected to companies that were awarded defense contracts worth \$76 billion between the years 2001 and 2002. One of them, Jack Sheehan, a retired Marine Corps general, is a senior vice president at Bechtel, the giant international engineering outfit. Riley Bechtel, the company chairman, is on President Bush's Export Council. Former Secretary of State George Shultz, who is also on the board of directors of the Bechtel Group, is the chairman of the advisory board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. When asked by the *New York Times* whether he was concerned about the appearance of a conflict of interest, he said, "I don't know that Bechtel would particularly benefit from it. But if there's work to be done, Bechtel is the type of company that could do it."

So Iraq is being groomed for "liberation." (Or did they mean "liberalization" all along?) The *Wall Street Journal* reports that "the Bush administration has drafted sweeping plans to remake Iraq's economy in the U.S. image." Iraq's constitution is being redrafted, its trade laws, tax laws, and intellectual property laws rewritten in order to turn it into an American-style capitalist economy. The United States Agency for International Development has invited U.S. companies to bid for contracts that range between road building, water systems, text book distribution, and cell phone networks.

Soon after Bush the Lesser announced that he wanted American farmers to feed the world, Dan Amstutz, a former senior executive of Cargill, the biggest grain exporter in the world, was put in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq. Kevin Watkins, Oxfam's policy director, said, "Putting Dan Amstutz in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq is like putting Saddam Hussein in the chair of a human rights commission." The two men who have been shortlisted to run operations for man-

the "independent" judiciary, the "free" press, the parliament—and molding them to their purpose. The project of corporate globalization has cracked the code. Free elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market has reduced them to commodities on sale to the highest bidder.

It is a cruel irony that the United States, which has the most ardent, vociferous defenders of the idea of free speech, and (until recently) the most elaborate legislation to protect it, has so circumscribed the space in which that freedom can be expressed. In a strange, convoluted way, the sound and fury that accompanies the legal and conceptual defense of free speech in America serves to mask the process of the rapid erosion of the possibilities of actually exercising that freedom. The news and entertainment industry in America is almost entirely controlled by a few major corporations—AOL-Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, News Corporation. Each of these corporations owns and controls TV stations, film studios, record companies, and publishing ventures. Effectively, the exits are sealed. And yet Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission Michael Powell, the son of Secretary of State Colin Powell, has instituted even further deregulation of the communication industry, which will lead to even greater consolidation.

So here it is—the World's Greatest Democracy, led by a man who was not legally elected. What price have the American people paid for this spurious presidency?

In the three years of George Bush the Lesser's term, the

aging Iraqi oil have worked with Shell, BP, and Fluor. Fluor is embroiled in a lawsuit by black South African workers who have accused the company of exploiting and brutalizing them during the apartheid era. Shell, of course, is well known for its devastation of the Ogoni tribal lands in Nigeria.

Tom Brokaw, one of America's best-known TV anchors, was inadvertently succinct about the process. "One of the things we don't want to do," he said, "is to destroy the infrastructure of Iraq because in a few days we're going to own that country." Now that the ownership deeds are being settled, Iraq is ready for New Democracy. So, as Lenin used to ask: What is to be done? Well ...

**W**e might as well accept the fact that there is no conventional military force that can successfully challenge the American war machine. Terrorist strikes only give the U.S. government an opportunity it is eagerly awaiting to further tighten its stranglehold. To argue against U.S. military aggression by saying that it will increase the possibilities of terrorist strikes is futile. It's like threatening Brer Rabbit that you'll throw him into the bramble bush. Any one who has read the documents written by The Project for the New American Century can attest to that.

The government's suppression of the congressional committee report on September 11, which found that there was intelligence warning of the strikes that was ignored, also attests to the fact that, for all their posturing, the terrorists and the Bush

Andersen, Merrill Lynch, and American Express could find themselves under siege. These lists are being honed and refined by activists across the world. They could become a practical guide that directs the amorphous but growing fury in the world. Suddenly, the "inevitability" of the project of Corporate Globalization is beginning to seem more than a little evitable.

It would be naïve to imagine that we can directly confront empire. Our strategy must be to isolate empire's working parts and disable them one by one. No target is too small. No victory too insignificant. We could reverse the idea of the economic sanctions imposed on poor countries by empire and its allies. We could impose a regime of "peoples' sanctions" on every corporate house that has been awarded with a contract in postwar Iraq, just as activists in this country and around the world targeted institutions of apartheid. Each one of them should be named, exposed, and boycotted. Forced out of business. That could be our response to Shock and Awe. It would be a great beginning.

Another urgent challenge is to expose the corporate media for the boardroom bulletin that it really is. We need to create a universe of alternative information. The battle to reclaim democracy is going to be a difficult one. Our freedoms were not granted to us by any governments. They were wrested from them by us. And once we surrender them, the battle to retrieve them is called a revolution. It is a battle that must range across continents and countries. It must not acknowledge national boundaries but, if it is to succeed, it has to begin here. In America. The only institution more powerful than the U.S. government is American civil society. The rest of us are subjects of slave nations. We are by no means powerless, but you have the power of proximity. You have access to the Imperial Palace and the emperor's chambers. Empire's conquests are being carried out in your name, and you have the right to refuse. You could refuse to fight. Refuse to move those missiles from the warehouse to the dock. Refuse to wave that flag. Refuse the victory parade.

You have a rich tradition of resistance. Hundreds of thousands of you have sur-

vived the relentless propaganda you have been subjected to, and are actively fighting your own government. In the ultra-patriotic climate that prevails in the United States, that's as brave as any Iraqi or Afghan or Palestinian fighting for his or her homeland. If you join the battle, not in your hundreds of thousands, but in your millions, you will be greeted joyously by the rest of the world. And you will see how beautiful it is to be gentle instead of brutal, safe instead of scared. Befriended instead of isolated. Loved instead of hated.

I hate to disagree with your president. Yours is by no means a great nation. But you could be a great people. History is giving you the chance. Seize the time. ■

regime might as well be working as a team. They both hold people responsible for the actions of their governments. They both believe in the doctrine of collective guilt and collective punishment. Their actions benefit each other greatly.

The U.S. government has already displayed in no uncertain terms the range and extent of its capability for paranoid aggression. In human psychology, paranoid aggression is usually an indicator of nervous insecurity. It could be argued that it's no different in the case of the psychology of nations. Empire is paranoid because it has a soft underbelly. Its "homeland" may be defended by border patrols and nuclear weapons, but its economy is strung out across the globe. Its economic outposts are exposed and vulnerable. Already the Internet is buzzing with elaborate lists of American and British government products and companies that should be boycotted. Apart from the usual targets—Coke, Pepsi, McDonald's—government agencies like USAID, the British DFID, British and American banks, Arthur

*This essay was adapted from a May 17 speech sponsored by the Center for Economic and Social Rights ([www.cesr.org](http://www.cesr.org)) at Riverside Church in New York. Arundhati Roy's books, *War Talk* and *Power Politics*, are available at [www.southendpress.org](http://www.southendpress.org).*

# Hidden Agenda

## Republican tax cuts aim to bloat the rich and eviscerate social programs

By David Moberg

**J**udged simply on whether it makes good sense as public policy, the Republican tax cut narrowly pushed through Congress could hardly have been worse. Well, perhaps it could have been: Bush's initial proposal was even more dreadful. But his basic vision remained intact. Here's a short list of what's wrong with the oh-so-slightly improved Congressional version.

- It's bad tax policy, introducing tremendous uncertainty.
- It's not very effective as a short-term stimulus to the economy.
- It's grossly unfair.
- It's likely over the long term to actually reduce growth.
- It's extremely irresponsible fiscally.
- It's dishonest and deceptive—in its design but especially in bringing Enron-style principles to government accounting.
- It ignores real needs and threatens government spending that would be good for the economy and society.

From the Republican point of view, those are meaningless objections, maybe even badges of honor. The real objectives of the tax cut are not economic, despite the rhetoric, but political.

In the short run, the Republicans hope to win in 2004 by running as tax cutters against tax-and-spend Democrats. In the long run, Republicans plan to starve and thus drastically shrink federal government, especially spending on social programs. As budgetary crises resulting from the tax cut unfold, the only solutions will be devastating cuts in programs—including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. And if the economy suffers, as is likely, the prescription will be more tax cuts.

Since the vast majority of people will be net losers and a few people at the top will be enormous net winners, lying has become an essential part of this strategy—lying that is made possible by swollen Republican campaign coffers and an increasingly concentrated and conservative corporate media.

Nor will this assault let up. Over the summer, Republicans are planning to push further tax cuts, including a permanent repeal of the estate tax. With the ink barely dry on the first tax cut, proposals are being floated to expand some of the tax cuts just passed and to extend earlier cuts that were deceptively designed to "sunset" at an arbitrary date (like with the estate tax, which

was scheduled to be reduced to zero over the decade and then revert to its 2000 rate).

Republicans think they have Democrats in a trap, but if they do, it's a trap the Democrats have helped to set. The Republicans figure that they have an advantage if voters are given a choice between Democrats campaigning for balanced budgets and fiscal responsibility and Republicans arguing for even more tax cuts. Even though polls show that by nearly two to one the public favors stimulating the economy by reducing the deficit or adopting other policies rather than cutting taxes, the Republicans may be right, given the limited success the GOP had arguing for balanced budgets prior to Reagan.

Earlier this year the Democrats did offer a much better designed tax cut package, which would have stimulated the economy and also would have been more fiscally responsible and fairer than the Republican alternatives. However, in a simple battle between a big tax cut and a small tax cut, as the Republicans and their media allies will portray the choice, the Democrats may still be at a disadvantage.

If offered the option of big tax cuts for the rich or health care for everyone, the public favors health insurance by 81 percent to 14 percent, according to a May Gallup poll (in a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll the public chose health care over tax cuts by a margin of 55 to 36 percent). Strong majorities also would choose preserving social security and Medicare over tax cuts. The Democrats do have a fighting chance if they offer voters the choice between lower taxes for millionaires or a long list of other goals, including better primary and secondary education, college scholarships, job training, health care for everyone, improved transportation, better home care for needy senior citizens, good child care and early childhood education, affordable housing, a clean environment, aid to state and city governments, and AIDS research. But first they will have to make a case both for what the tax dollars will do and for a progressive tax code. The Democrats can also gain by showing how the regressive tax cuts are part of an overall Republican strategy to attack the living standards of working people, such as making it much easier for employers to avoid paying overtime premiums to most workers.

Democrats must also drive the message home that the Republican tax bill is bad public policy. The legislation accelerates



planned reductions in personal income tax rates and lowers the tax rate on both dividends and capital gains. It gives businesses depreciation breaks. It also provides increased child credits, reductions for some married couples and an expansion of the lowest tax bracket. The cost, in theory, is \$350 billion over 10 years.

But if all of the provisions designed to "sunset" over the next few years are extended, as Republicans have said they will do, then the real cost will be at least \$800 billion over a decade, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). If Republicans succeed in extending all of the tax code changes set to sunset in both the 2001 and 2004 tax bills, the cost—not counting interest on growing debt—will be almost \$2 trillion over the next decade, roughly equal to the official costs of all tax cuts passed under Bush, according to William Gale and Peter R. Orszag of the Brookings Institution.

Each year the revenue costs will grow. In 2013, the cost of just extending the sunset tax provisions will be \$430 billion. That's about 2.4 percent of the gross domestic product, or about triple the size of the official shortfall projected for Social Security over the next 75 years, according to Gale and Orszag.

**F**rom a technical point of view, the legislation is bad tax policy because it introduces so much uncertainty, making it difficult for businesses or individuals to plan. It also is likely to create a new surge in tax shelters, according to Len Burman of the Urban Institute, as rich individuals try to shift ordinary income to lower-taxed capital gains.

Not surprisingly, the tax cuts offer little short-term stimulus. That was only a public relations gambit by the Bush administration, which wants tax cuts in good times and bad. About one-fifth of the tax cuts are targeted for the next two fiscal years, so clearly this bill is not aimed at the immediate problem of economic sluggishness and unemployment.

And while the tax cut package also includes \$20 billion in aid to the states over two years, which Bush had long opposed, that barely addresses the \$80 billion in deficits faced by the states this year. These deficits will lead to some combination of increased state taxes, reduced state programs and cuts in state jobs, all of which will swamp the legislation's modest stimulative effect. Also, unless states "decouple" from new changes in the Federal Tax Code, they could lose \$3 billion over the next two fiscal years (and \$16 billion in revenue over the next decade), according to CBPP. As a short-term stimulus "this proposal is the worst of all worlds," says CBPP executive director Robert Greenstein.

The bill will do little to boost the economy, largely because it is so unfair. More than two-thirds of the new tax cuts will go to the richest 10 percent of taxpayers, and more than half to the richest 5 percent, according to Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ). Only 7.8 percent will go to the bottom 60 percent. The richest 1 percent will average almost \$100,000 a year in tax cuts over the next four

years, CTJ calculates. Bush contends that the average family would get \$1,000 in tax cuts and every taxpayer will see a tax cut. But the cuts for the bottom 60 percent will actually average less than \$100 a year, and more than one-third of all households—including millions of taxpayers—will receive no tax cut at all in 2003.

Republicans deliberately excluded providing help to low-income households. While figuring out a way to shoehorn more benefits for the rich into the final law, Republican conferees dropped a Senate-passed provision that would have provided a small increase in an existing refundable child tax credit for working families that make between \$10,500 and \$26,625. This means that families of nearly 12 million children—one sixth of all children in the United States—will not receive any help, according to CBPP, since they already make too little to pay income taxes. In addition, according to the Tax Policy Center of the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, 8.1 million taxpayers—mainly low-income single people or heads of households with no young children—will receive no tax reduction.

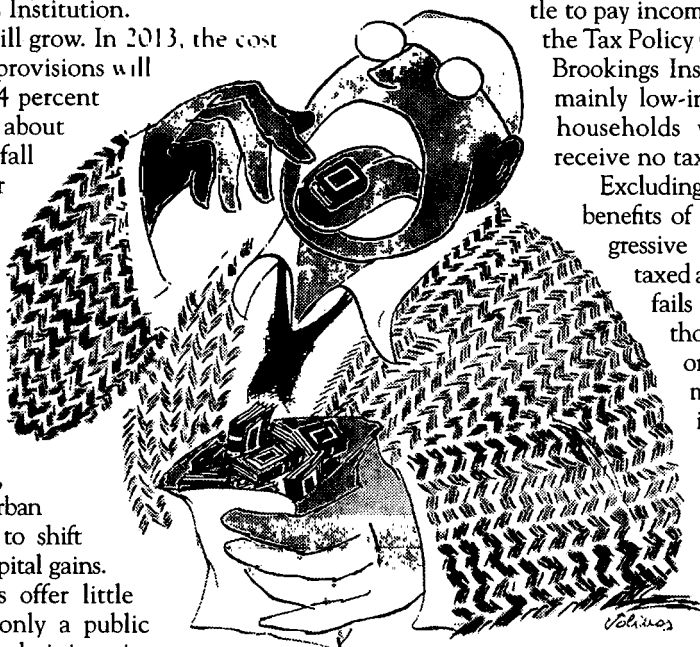
Excluding low-income households from the benefits of the tax cuts undermines the progressive principle that people should be taxed according to their ability to pay and fails to provide any meaningful help to those who need it. It also gives little or nothing to those who would be most likely to spend their tax cut immediately, providing needed economic stimulus. Instead, as CTJ's analysis shows, the richest 1 percent not only receive the biggest immediate tax cuts, but their share of federal taxes also declines most dramatically through 2010, as a result of all three Bush tax cuts—while the

share paid by upper-middle-income taxpayers rises over the same period. The share paid by the bottom 60 percent will remain basically constant. And if the "sunset" tax changes are extended, the rich will benefit even more.

While Republicans have claimed that their cuts will spark long-term growth, several studies—including analyses by the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation as well as by non-governmental economists—suggest that the legislation will have at best little effect on long term growth or, more likely, a slightly negative effect. Increased government borrowing, for example, could raise interest rates enough to negate any possible mild incentive for increased investment spurred by lower dividend or capital gains taxes.

Yet the lies and distortions continue, including the suggestion that Americans are overtaxed. In reality the United States taxes less than all other major industrial countries and has higher levels of inequality. With this legislation, the federal government will collect less income tax as a share of the economy than at any time since 1943.

The big question is: How long can this Enron style of government continue before it crashes, or before citizens replace the CEO? ■



Part two in a special  
In These Times series  
on civil liberties  
and surveillance

# GUILT by association

By Matt Olson

**I**n downtown Los Angeles, Ruben is enduring his freedom. At 23, Ruben wants job training, education, and a chance to elevate himself. But like 300,000 youth in California and hundreds of thousands of others across the nation, Ruben (whose name has been changed to protect his identity) is identified in state and local law enforcement databases as a gang member. The databases are part of a wide-ranging effort to identify and target gang members for enhanced criminal sentencing.

Under California's Street Terrorism Enforcement and Protection (STEP) Act, enacted in 1988, gangs are considered to "threaten, terrorize, and commit a multitude of crimes against ... peaceful citizens." Indeed, gangs are a problem. In 2001, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department recorded 587 gang-related homicides in Los Angeles County. The act provides stiff penalties for gang activity on the principle that "whenever you commit a crime, you are doing so for the gang," says Alejandro Alonso, a Los Angeles gangs expert and creator of the Web site [www.streetgangs.com](http://www.streetgangs.com). As such, individuals entered in the gang database can be subject to enhanced sentencing. The minimum enhancement is six months, but some crimes carry as much as 15 years.

Ruben says he found this out "the hard way." In 1993, Ruben was with his older cousin, a known gang member, when the cousin was stopped by police. "Since I was with him, they asked me a bunch of questions ... and took a picture of me," he says. He was 13.

Five years later he was charged with assault for being involved in a street fight. "I'm in court, and the prosecutor is trying to put gang enhancements on me because he says I'm in this gang file," Ruben says. "I'm like, what? Gang file? That was the first I had heard of it." He shakes his head. "And now I can't get off the list. I asked my public defender to help, but he just waved his hand, like, 'Whatever.' The judge wouldn't let me talk."

As the war on terrorism continues, Ruben looks at federal anti-terrorism laws like the USA Patriot Act and worries that his presence in the gang database makes him vulnerable. "In

California, they already call gangs 'terrorists,'" he says. "What's going to come next?"

**T**he criteria as to what constitutes a gang member varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but the pattern is generally the same. Police can stop and question individuals on the street either as part of an arrest or under the "common law right to inquire"—an amorphous legal principle which, as determined by case law, is interpreted to mean that a police officer may stop and speak to a person as long as that person is free to ignore the inquiry (the idea being that such an inquiry does not fall under the category of a search and seizure). However, many people don't realize they are free to refuse to answer questions.

Police officers use the "right to inquire" to stop an individual they believe to be a gang member, ask them questions, take note of their dress—checking for identifying markings such as tattoos—and search them. "The cops can basically make a person strip in the street if they want," says Kim McGill of the Youth Justice Coalition, a nonprofit group working to reform the databases. "They can stop you regardless of your age, regardless of whether you are with your parents or not. They can ask you where you live, who you hang with, what nicknames you may have. Based on how you answer those questions, the cops can assume you are in a gang and put you in that gang database."

Don Lyddane, an investigator with the FBI's Safe Streets and Gang Unit, defends these databases. The practices are intelligence databases assembled in accordance with the STEP Act, Lyddane says, and just part and parcel of good detective work. "Gang members are, by definition, involved in criminal activity," he argues. "So it's not like these databases are keeping tabs on your good citizens down the street. Having these databases allows you to manage information, anticipate who may commit crimes, and track down suspects quicker and easier."

The database was originally developed by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in the mid-'70s, when Latino gangs were

widespread in Los Angeles and the Crips and Bloods were on the rise. The system, designed and implemented by Detective Wes McBride, now retired, and his staff, served as a model for California and the rest of the nation. Now, numerous states, including Florida, Illinois, Texas, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, maintain and use gang databases.

Under McBride's system, as he describes it, officers must undergo training at a school for gang officers. They must then make their decision about whether someone is in a gang by judging them against two to nine potential criteria. The officer submits this information to a supervisor, who confirms the decision to label someone as a gang member. "There's no doubt the databases are useful if you are a police officer," Alonso says. "The database can put a lot of different investigative tools at your disposal."

The problem is that the tools are not always sharp or precise. "What you see is people who don't consider themselves gang members being put on the database because of their associations," Alonso says. "Then, from a legal standpoint, ... if you ever get picked up for a crime, the presumption is going to be that whatever you did, you did for the gang, and there will be extra penalties."

Lyddane thinks these concerns are overblown. In order to add a name to a gang database, Lyddane says, "There has to be some sort of criminal nexus. I don't know of any cop or jurisdiction that identifies someone as a gang member based solely on baggy clothes."

But he concedes that the criteria for identifying someone as a gang member are flexible. "You aren't looking to establish [gang affiliation] beyond a reasonable doubt," he says, "but rather to identify someone as a gang member, according to a specific set of criteria, for intelligence gathering purposes."

**M**cGill and other opponents of gang databases are not so sanguine, given the questions surrounding the databases' precision and accuracy. "If you use their criteria," Alonso says, "you could enter just about anybody into the database."

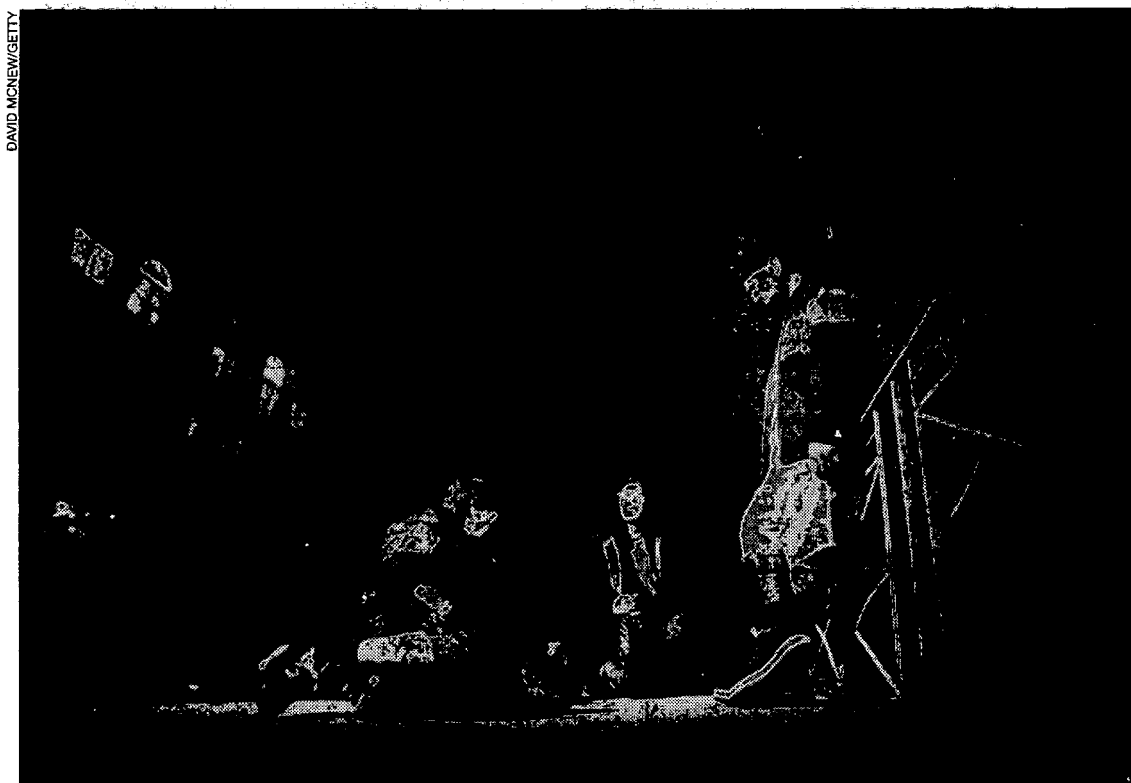
"I've seen estimates that as high as 50 to 80 percent of the information in these databases is inaccurate [or] erroneous," says Carol Sobel, senior staff attorney for the ACLU. One Los Angeles Sheriff's Department officer contacted for this story confirmed the low

end of those estimates. Lyddane acknowledges problems in certain localities. "But on the whole," he says, "in most jurisdictions, law enforcement officers are very careful about who they choose to include in those databases."

One would hope so, given that the only way to get off the list is to be free from police contact for five years, even if you shouldn't have been put on in the first place. "That's not just free from arrest," Alonso says. "That's five years without coming into contact with the police at all. Not even a traffic stop."

How likely is it that a person of color in the inner city can go five years without being stopped by a police officer?

Even in Los Angeles—a county whose system for identifying gang members Lyddane says is "one of the best"—



**Whether you're a gang member or not, police databases may insist you are—and there's nothing you can do about it.**

mistakes are made. Ed is a skinny 16-year-old (his name has been changed) just out of East Lake Juvenile Hall, where he was serving a sentence for vandalism. He's an admitted graffiti artist, but denies any gang affiliation. And like Ruben, he was added to the database because he got stopped walking with his older brother. "When I got out of East Lake, I was supposed to just be on regular probation," Ed says. "But when I sat down and talked to my probation officer, he said that since I was in a gang, there were going to be 11 new conditions to my probation."



Among them: Ed cannot wear baggy clothes or a jersey with the number 13 on it. He cannot shave his head, and must avoid certain areas of the city. He also cannot associate with any known or suspected gang members—including his brother. Ed says: "I was like, 'But I'm not in a gang,' and [the officer] was like, 'Yes you are,' and he tossed these Polaroids that the cops had taken of me and my brother. I told him that it was my brother, but it didn't make a difference."

Police are not required to inform anyone, minor or adult, whether they've been placed on the list, so people like Ruben and Ed have no way to find out if they are on the database, short of being arrested. "The only way we can find out is through undercover sources in the police department," McGill says.

"Even if you get off in a five-year purge," Sobel adds, "you can't be sure, because no one is monitoring it."

Ed says he tried to have his name taken off the database—his parents even visited the station to make an appeal—but police didn't respond. "I think I'm still on there," he says, "but I can't find out, 'cause when I call the police they won't give me that information. They say they are protecting my privacy."

Sobel says the ACLU has made challenges to the language and spirit of the STEP Act, but that the challenges have been largely unsuccessful. "The courts have, in effect, said that no, the language in the law is not too vague," she says. "We have had some success on a case by case basis by challenging specific incidences where people have been wrongly put on the database, but because there is no published database, ... it's difficult to mount a comprehensive challenge to the law."

**T**he civil rights issues surrounding gang databases would be alarming at any time. But with the Justice Department's push to gather more and more information under the rubric of the war on terrorism, the issue's salience moves front and center. The domestic terrorism provisions of the USA Patriot Act "could likely be applied to street gang members, the way that it could be applied to environmental groups," Sobel says.

"One of the things we've seen in this administration's so-called war on terror is that, in order to secure the cooperation of countries with our program, we are agreeing to classify groups that are troublesome in their countries as 'terrorist groups,' whether they are or not," she continues. "Many gang members in this country are also nationals of another country, and many have contact with

individuals who are associated with alleged terrorist group[s]. Under the Patriot Act, those people are terrorists, as are the people they associate with."

In fact, gang members are conveniently listed in a database already. "They call it the Department of Homeland Security, but down here they should just call it the Department of Homeboy Security," Sobel says.

If there is a silver lining for gang database opponents, it's that existing efforts to consolidate gang information into a comprehensive national database have been hobbled by infighting. "There's been attempts to bring all these databases together," says McBride. "But they haven't been really successful because [local law enforcement] doesn't want the Feds to control their data, and vice versa." Lyddane echoes this sentiment. "Realistically, I don't think a national database is going to be implemented anytime soon. I think we'll probably stay with the status quo."

As for reforms, Lyddane and McBride don't think they are necessary. "These databases are designed to ensure that we have as low a level of error as we can," Lyddane says.

But opponents like McGill and Sobel want to see a greater level of transparency and accountability in the databases. "Instead of five years without any police contact," says McGill, "that should be more like 18 months." And then there are questions of due process and the constitutional right to be presumed innocent. "The burden of proof should lie with law enforcement," says Sobel. "It should be their responsibility to prove that someone is in a gang. You shouldn't ever have to prove that you are not."

But until those reforms are realized, people like Ed and Ruben have to watch their backs. "You gotta make sure you got everything right," Ruben says. "'Cause these cops will stop you and look for some reason to bust your ass. You can't be bald, or wear certain clothes, or even see your family or your baby's mama if they are gang members. 'Cause if you do, they'll get you. They're watching, and they'll get you one way or another." ■

## 'In California, they already call gangs "terrorists." What's going to come next?'

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# Ideology Reloaded

By Slavoj Žižek

**T**here is something inherently naïve about taking the “philosophical” underpinning of *The Matrix* series seriously and discussing its implications. The Wachowski brothers, who wrote and directed the films, are not philosophers,

## The Matrix Reloaded

Written and directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski

but just two guys who flirt with and exploit, in an often confused way, some “postmodern” and New Age notions in the service of science fiction. But *The Matrix* is one of those films that function as a kind of Rorschach test, setting in motion the universalized process of recognition, like the proverbial painting of God that seems always to stare directly at you from wherever you look at it—practically every orientation seems to recognize itself in it.

My Lacanian friends are telling me that the authors must have read Lacan. The Frankfurt School partisans see in *The Matrix* the extrapolated embodiment of *Kulturindustrie*, directly taking over, colonizing our inner life itself, using us as the source of energy. New

Agers see how our world is just a mirage generated by a global Mind embodied in the World Wide Web. Or the series is a baroque illustration of Plato’s cave, in which ordinary humans are prisoners, tied firmly to their seats and compelled to watch the shadowy performance of (what they falsely consider to be) reality—in short, the position of the cinema spectators themselves.

This search for the philosophical content of *The Matrix* is therefore a lure, a trap to be avoided. Such readings that project into the film refined philosophical or psychoanalytic conceptual distinctions are effectively much inferior to a naïve immersion that I witnessed when I saw *The Matrix* at a local theater in Slovenia. I had the unique opportunity to sit close to a man in his late twenties who was so engrossed in the film that he repeatedly disturbed other spectators with loud exclamations like: “My God, wow, so there is no reality! So we are all puppets!”

**H**owever, what is interesting is to read *The Matrix* movies not as containing a consistent philosophical discourse, but as rendering, in their very inconsistencies, the antagonisms of our ideological and social predicament. What, then, is the Matrix? Simply what Lacan called the

*The Matrix* movies may not be consistent philosophically, but that inconsistency mirrors the left’s own confusion with the politics of liberation.

“big Other,” the virtual symbolic order, the network that structures reality for us. The big Other pulls the strings; the subject doesn’t speak, the subject “is spoken” by the symbolic structure. This big Other is the name for the social Substance, for all that on account of which the subject never fully dominates the effects of his acts; his activity is always something else than what he aimed at or anticipated. And the inconsistencies of the film’s narrative perfectly mirror the difficulties of our breaking out of the constraints of the social Substance.

When Morpheus tries to explain to the still perplexed Neo what the Matrix is, he links it to a failure in the structure of the universe: “What you know you can’t explain. But you feel it. You’ve felt it your entire life. That there is something wrong with the world. You don’t know what it is. But it’s there, like a splinter in your mind driving you mad.” Yet toward the end of the first film, Smith, the agent of the Matrix, gives a different, much more Freudian explanation: “Did you know that

**Forget about the red pill and the blue pill:**

**The real choice in *The Matrix* is between two modes of illusion.**

the first Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world? Where none suffered, where everyone would be happy? It was a disaster. No one would accept the program. ... As a species, human beings define their reality through suffering and misery.”

The imperfection of our world is thus at the same time the sign of its virtuality and the sign of its reality. Linked to this inconsistency is the ambiguous status of the liberation of humanity announced by Neo in the last scene of the first film. As the result of Neo’s intervention, there is

a "system failure" in the Matrix. At the same time, Neo addresses people still caught in it as the Savior who will teach them how to liberate themselves from the constraints of the Matrix; they will be able to break its physical laws, bend metals, fly in the air. But the problem is that all these "miracles" are possible only if we remain *within* the virtual reality sustained by the Matrix and merely bend or change its rules; our "real" status is still that of the slaves. We are, as it were, merely gaining additional power to change our mental prison rules. So what about exiting from the Matrix altogether and entering the "real reality" in which we are miserable creatures living on the destroyed earth's surface? Is the solution a postmodern strategy of "resistance," of endlessly "subverting" or "displacing" the power system, or a more radical attempt at annihilating it?

Recall another memorable scene in *The Matrix*, in which Neo has to choose between the red and the blue pill. His choice is that between Truth and

Pleasure: either the traumatic awakening into reality, or persisting in the illusion regulated by the Matrix. Neo chooses Truth—in contrast to the most despicable character in the movie, the informer-agent among the rebels, who picks up with his fork a juicy red bit of a steak and says: "You know, I know this steak doesn't exist. I know the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss." He follows the pleasure principle, which tells him that it is preferable to stay within the illusion, even if one knows it's only an illusion.

Yet this choice is not quite so simple. What, exactly, does Neo offer to humanity at the film's end? Not a direct awakening into the "desert of the real," but a free-floating between the multitude of virtual universes: Instead of being simply enslaved by the Matrix, one can liberate oneself by way of learning to change the rules of our universe and learn to fly freely or violate other physical laws. The choice is not between bitter truth and pleasurable

illusion, but rather between the two modes of illusion. The traitor is bound to the illusion of our "reality," dominated and manipulated by the Matrix, while Neo offers to humanity the experience of the universe as a playground in which we can play a multitude of games, freely passing from one to another, reshaping the rules that fix our experience of reality.

In an Adornian way, these inconsistencies are the film's moment of truth: They signal the antagonisms of our late-capitalist social experience, antagonisms concerning basic couplings like reality and pain (reality as that which disturbs the reign of the pleasure principle), and freedom and system (freedom is only possible within a system that hinders its full deployment). But the ultimate strength of the film is on a different level. The unique impact of the film resides not so much in its central thesis (what we experience as reality is an artificial virtual reality generated by the Matrix, the mega-computer directly attached to all our minds), but in

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its central image of the millions of human beings leading a claustrophobic life in water-filled cradles, kept alive in order to generate electricity. So when (some of) the people "awaken" from their imprisonment, this awakening is not the opening into the wide space of the external reality, but first the horrible realization of this enclosure, where each of us is effectively just a fetus-like organism, immersed in prenatal fluid.

This utter passivity is the fantasy that sustains our conscious experience as active, self-positing subjects—it is the ultimate perverse fantasy, the notion that we are ultimately instruments of the Matrix's—the big Other's—*jouissance*, sucked of our life-substance like batteries. This brings us to the true libidinal enigma: Why does the Matrix need human energy? The purely energetic solution is, of course, meaningless: The Matrix could have easily found another more reliable source of energy, which would have not demanded the extremely complex arrangement of virtual reality coordinated for millions of human units. The only consistent answer is that the Matrix feeds on human *jouissance*. And so we are back at the fundamental Lacanian thesis that the big Other itself, far from being an anonymous machine, needs the constant influx of *jouissance* of those who come to define it, even constitute it.

**T**he *Matrix Reloaded* proposes—or, rather, plays with—a series of ways to overcome the inconsistencies of its prequel. But in doing so, it gets entangled in new inconsistencies of its own. The film's end is open and undecided not only narratively, but also with regard to its underlying vision of the universe. The basic tone is that of additional complications and suspicions that render problematic the simple and clear ideology of liberation from the Matrix that underpins the first film.

The communally ecstatic ritual of the people in the underground city of Zion cannot but recall a fundamentalist religious gathering. Doubts are also cast upon the two key prophetic figures. Are Morpheus' visions true, or is he a paranoid madman ruthlessly imposing his hallucinations? Neo doesn't know if he can trust the Oracle, a woman who foresees the future: Is she also manipulating Neo with her prophecies? Is she a representative of the "good" aspect of

the Matrix, in contrast to Agent Smith, who turns into an excess of the Matrix, a virus run amok, trying to avoid being deleted by multiplying itself? And what about the cryptic pronouncements of the Architect of the Matrix, its software writer,

**The films imply that although economy is the real site and politics a theater of shadows, the main battle is still to be fought in politics.**

its God? He informs Neo that he is actually living in the sixth upgraded version of the Matrix: In each, a savior figure has arisen, but his attempt to liberate humanity ended in a large-scale catastrophe. Is Neo's rebellion, far from being a unique event, just part of a larger cycle of the disturbance and restitution of the Order?

By the end of *The Matrix Reloaded*, everything is cast in doubt: The question is not only whether any revolutions against the Matrix can accomplish what they claim or whether they have to end in an orgy of destruction, but whether they are not taken into account, planned even, by the Matrix itself. Are even those who are liberated from the Matrix free to make a choice at all? Is the solution to nonetheless risk the outright rebellion, or to resign oneself to play the local games of "resistance" while remaining within the Matrix, or even engage in collaboration with the "good" forces in the Matrix? This is where *The Matrix Reloaded* ends: in a failure of "cognitive mapping" that perfectly mirrors the sad predicament of today's left and its struggle against the System.

A supplementary twist is provided by the very end of the movie, when Neo magically stops the bad squidlike machines attacking the humans by merely raising his hand. How was he able to accomplish this in the "desert of the real," not within the Matrix where, of course, he can do wonders? Does this unexplained inconsistency indicate that "all there is is generated by the Matrix," that there is no ultimate reality? Although such a postmodern temptation—the easy way out of ontological confusion—is to be rejected, there is a

correct insight in this complication of the simple and straight division between the "real reality" and the Matrix-generated universe. Even if the struggle takes place in the "real reality," the key fight is to be won in the Matrix, which is why the human rebels re-enter its virtual universe.

To put it in terms of the good old Marxist couple infrastructure/superstructure: One should take into account the irreducible duality of, on the one hand, the "objective" material socio-economic processes taking place in reality as well as, on the other hand, the politico-ideological process proper. What if the domain of politics is inherently "sterile," a theater of shadows, but nonetheless crucial in transforming reality? So, although economy is the real site and politics a theater of shadows, the main fight is to be fought in politics and ideology.

Consider, for example, the disintegration of Communist power in Eastern Europe in the last years of the '80s. Although the main event was the actual loss of state power by the Communists, the crucial break occurred at a different level—in those magic moments when, although formally Communists were still in power, people all of a sudden lost their fear and no longer took the state's threats seriously. So even if "real" battles with the police continued, everyone somehow knew that the "game" was over. The title *The Matrix Reloaded* is thus quite appropriate: If part one was dominated by the impetus to exit the Matrix, to liberate oneself from its hold, part two makes it clear that the battle has to be won *within* the Matrix, that one has to return to it.

The filmmakers have thus dramatically raised the stakes of the *Matrix* series, confronting us with all the complications and confusions of the politics of liberation. And they have put themselves in a profoundly difficult spot: They now confront an almost impossible task. If the forthcoming part three, *The Matrix Revolutions*, is to succeed with anything like a happy ending, it will have to produce nothing less than the appropriate answer to the dilemmas of revolutionary politics today, a blueprint for the political act the left is desperately looking for. ■

Slavoj Žižek, a philosopher and psychoanalyst, is a senior researcher at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, in Essen, Germany.

# Who's Got the Power?

By David Moberg

Over the past century, the destructive nature of war has changed dramatically. As a result, argues Jonathan Schell, the world now faces two stark options: continuing along a path of military coercion to settle disputes, a path that leads toward even-

## The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People

By Jonathan Schell  
Metropolitan Books  
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tual armageddon, or pursuing a nonviolent, political path toward new and more democratic institutions—including a revised notion of national sovereignty—to resolve conflict.

It's a choice facing people everywhere in the world, but because of the overwhelming power of the United States, the most fateful decision will be whether that country chooses to be an empire or a republic. Given the increasingly open defense of a new American empire, there's an urgency to Schell's argument. But he offers an incomplete roadmap for avoiding the dire alternative of global annihilation.

Schell, a Nation Institute fellow and author of the bestselling *The Fate of the Earth*, contends that violence has now "become dysfunctional as a political instrument. Increasingly, it destroys the ends for which it is employed, killing the user as well as his victim. It has become the path to hell on earth and the end of the earth." His evidence includes the deadly battles of World War I, as well as the concentration camps and nuclear bombs of World War II. But the prospect of nuclear conflict clearly is the main reason why he believes war is dangerously obsolete. Beyond the spread of weapons of mass destruction, he writes, the big dangers facing the world today are the proliferation of ethnic, religious, national and class-based conflicts and the risk of

disproportionate response to these conflicts by the United States.

In the ideal type of war, Carl von Clausewitz wrote in his classic study of warfare, two armed forces fight without constraint to the death and defeat of one side. But in real war, politics must be in command, and defeat is as much moral—a decision of the loser not to keep fighting and to submit to the will of the victor—as it is physical. As war was transformed by the democratic revolution starting in the late 18th century—and the scientific revolution, the industrial revolution and imperialism—warfare increasingly defined the nation state and created a "war system" that often generated conflicts on its own. But with nuclear weapons, a new balance of terror emerged that relied especially on the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, maintaining

emerging out of the movements for national liberation and social revolution. In "people's wars," such as those fought in China and Vietnam, politics and war were fused and, more than in conventional war, politics was not only a weapon of war but the final arbiter of victory. There was also a parallel development of another approach to social change and conflict that was intensely political, but also spiritual and nonviolent, as exemplified by Gandhi and his notion of *satyagraha*, "truth-action" or active non-cooperation with oppressive institutions and figures.

While there was a widespread belief among many political philosophers and leaders in the West that state power depended on a monopoly of force and that revolution required violent overthrow of the government, Gandhi argued that the crucial prop to rulers was the consent and cooperation of the ruled. By withholding cooperation, people could bring down regimes nonviolently. Yet the expression "nonviolent" does not adequately convey the positive assertion of



Only global cooperation can prevent global terror.

the appearance of being ready to use nuclear weapons. In this complex psychological war, superpower leaders could only privately reveal their hesitation to engage in mutually assured destruction, for fear of upsetting the balance of terror.

Alongside this transformation of war among states, a new kind of war was also

the power of individuals to work together for a common goal that Schell posits as the alternative to violence. He sees the same popular power at work in the movements—described by Czech leader Vaclav Havel as "living in truth"—that undermined Communist regimes in the old Soviet bloc.

There is a hidden history of the power of nonviolent, political direct action that Schell presents as an alternative to violence. He argues that in many classic revolutions in the West—the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 in England, the

**Power flows from people acting out of a common purpose; violence is antithetical to power, not its essential force.**

American war for independence, and the French and Russian revolutions—violence played a secondary role. The turning point came when popular forces organized themselves and support drained away from the ruling powers, not primarily as a result of particular military actions. The violence associated with the French and Russian revolutions mostly came in the aftermath of the shift in power.

Whether the ultimate victory involved military action or not, both people's war and nonviolent “cooperative power” depended heavily on a political struggle, directed not only against the rulers but also toward some positive vision of an alternative way of governing society. Schell embraces Hannah Arendt's view that power flows from people acting out of a common purpose and that violence is antithetical to power—not its essential force. He finds hopeful models in the American civil rights movement, the popular movements that undermined Communism in Eastern Europe, and the nonviolent overthrow of military or repressive regimes in countries such as Greece, Portugal, Chile, Argentina, the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Africa.

This wave of successful movements for greater freedom and democracy has not, however, eliminated the threat of violence in international affairs. Indeed, Schell argues that there is a nightmare scenario in which freedom within a country, such as the United States, generates a power for the government that can in turn be directed toward oppressing others, but at a cost of turning that same repression back upon its own people. So far, attempts to

replace empires with a liberal internationalism of world government that could reduce the use of violence among states have foundered on notions of national sovereignty, which hold that power is indivisible. While that might apply to the use of coercive power, federalism and separation of powers in U.S. government clearly demonstrate how cooperative power is divisible and could be shared between nations and supranational bodies.

There are movements—global justice, feminist, environmentalist and peace—that could be united, Schell suggests, to press for abolition of nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction, international intervention to resolve the frequently ethnic-based wars of self-determination with new models of sovereignty (as in the Good Friday agreement to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict), action against crimes against humanity, and the founding of a “democratic league” to support democratic principles.

**W**hile this program sounds admirable, Schell gives few hints about how people might organize to achieve these ends. As long as the United States remains a dominant power with increasingly clear imperial ambitions, his proposals would be either dead letters (nuclear abolition) or perverted (a “democratic league” dominated by the United States would yield a narrow definition of democracy). But how can American movements organize in a way that turns this country away from such imperial ambitions? Just attacking Bush as an imperialist, or arguing in defense of republican government, won't make much headway politically.

This leads to a second issue: Unless these global movements representing “cooperative power” are able to win control or at least substantial influence over a significant number of powerful states (ultimately including the United States), then the movements themselves will be limited in what they can accomplish. The strategy for changing the international order requires not only citizen movements but sympathetic governments, and the model of overthrowing a Caetano in Portugal or Suharto in Indonesia doesn't work for building a new international order.

Also, despite taking note of the history of imperialism, Schell gives surprisingly little attention to the economic under-

pinnings of the global political order, the “war system,” and even ongoing civil wars. War and violence are not only pursued for economic motives, but economic ambitions are usually present in some form. In any case, redressing the inequities of today's global economy is essential for creating a more peaceful, democratic international order. The European Union, which Schell admires for its attempts to “delaminate” sovereignty to create a more peaceful continent, would probably not succeed without its prosperity and efforts to raise living standards of the poorer members.

The specter of nuclear war still haunts the world, but it certainly hasn't persuaded leaders of nations or political movements that violence is unthinkable. Despite Schell's argument that war has become dysfunctional, semi-functional wars are likely to continue. We haven't yet seen the backlash from the U.S. blitzkrieg in Iraq, but the Pentagon hawks are clearly not deterred by any fear of igniting a global firebomb as they contemplate the next war. They see war as extremely functional.

Part of any backlash is likely to be in the form of terrorism. Schell correctly argues that global cooperation, not unilateral U.S. action, is the best solution to global stateless terrorism like that represented by al-Qaeda. He also argues that abolition of existing stocks of weapons of mass destruction will make it more difficult for terrorists to get their hands on such weapons, but he acknowledges that the scientific genie is out of the bottle. With the knowledge of how to make such weapons easily available, abolition will be a tougher sell. But the balance of terror policies from the Cold War will have no effect on terrorists such as Osama bin Laden.

Schell has made a valuable contribution in emphasizing how politics has become more important than military action, even at a time when the United States has amassed a techno-military advantage over every other nation. The solutions to the threat of war consequently will have to be as much political, including economic policy, as they are steps toward dismantling the machinery of war. Schell also raises hopes that the political movement for change can be both nonviolent and successful, thus helping to break a cycle of violence that could destroy us all. ■



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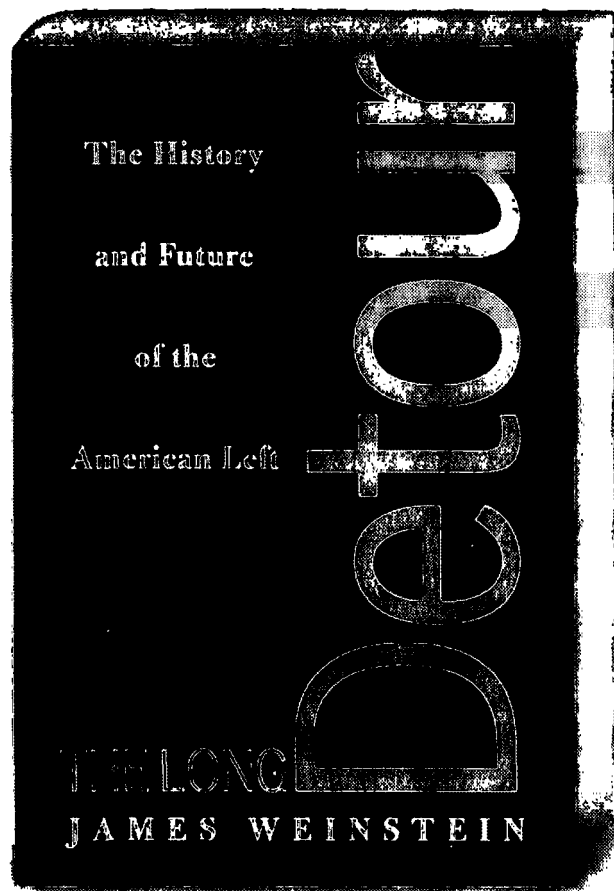
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continued from back cover

from the streets. There followed two nights of rioting, though fortunately no one was seriously injured. Earlier, one British man, Martin Shaw, 39, received fractured vertebrae after police, incredibly, cut through the rope he was using to scale a bridge from which to hang a banner and let him fall 65 feet to the ground.

But as Sunday progressed, locals fought Swiss and later German police, who used gas and thunderflash grenades as their main method of control. One British Indymedia journalist was injured by a grenade.

Meanwhile, an hour and a bit away, the press corps were not so interested. "It is so hard not to be seduced," said a couple of British journalists unwisely within earshot of *In These Times*. "All the security and the free food: You try not to, but ..." Indeed, the press center was a base *de luxe*. Thousands of journalists were enclosed in this hi-tech country camp with streams of video and streams of water, replete, respectively, with empty statements and overfed rainbow trout. Views of broken glass and the smell of gas were replaced by views of the beautiful mountains and the smell of baking lamb, served up by trusted waiters from the French Interior Ministry brought all the way from Paris. As diners entered the hall, they formed a *cordon d'honneur*, each greeting journalists in a variety of languages.

Oh, and there was the summit itself. Nothing happened. It didn't really seem to

matter. Fattened-calf presenters and "news processors" reflected back the sound bites of the elite. They pretended the latest offer of money to stop African poverty, and most importantly, AIDS, was a real one and not a numbers game. The fact that the G8 promised money to Africa at Genoa in 2001, virtually none of which has been forthcoming, was ignored, if it was remembered at all. After all, French President Jacques Chirac said the G8 was going to work closely with the poorest nations. So that is what was reported.

The United States managed to get the G8 to pass a "resolution" telling North Korea not to develop nuclear weapons, hardly groundbreaking news. Maybe telling Donald Rumsfeld not to sell them parts in the first place as a member of the board of directors of ABB, the Swiss engineering and nuclear energy firm that supplied North Korea, would also help—but hey, we're lapsing back into reality. And so did Chirac, briefly. He kind of gave it away in his Monday evening press conference. "We don't have any authority, we cannot pass laws, we are just a club: a club, that's all," he said. It was the only line of the event worth talking about.

Back in Geneva, on Monday night, the riots started up again. This time the visiting German Politzei had fully taken over from their softer Swiss cousins. Their giant water cannons and firework-style gas canisters proved more effective in moving around the crowds of mainly Genovese

## Views of broken glass and the smell of gas were replaced by views of the beautiful mountains and the smell of baking lamb.

young men who attempted to confront them. Despite this unusual international policing, a significant amount of looting did occur. More graffiti was sprayed up, more windows were smashed by the *casseurs*, and more press columns were devoted to something else. Like President Bush meeting the chefs at his hotel.

It may "just" be "a club." It may be a "seductive" free trip for thousands of lazy reporters and presenters; it may serve up a wicked *carre d'agneau*. But maybe those are not good enough reasons for the G8 to carry on. As we saw inside the networked, broadband *de vin* world of the press center: Can't they just phone each other? ■

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# Postcard from the G8

By Adam Porter

EVIAN, FRANCE—So the game was played. Missile batteries, special divers, police boats, all the boys' toys and more. Protests, riots, window smashing, graffiti plus local confusion, blame and bemusement. Yep, the Group of 8 were back.

The actual summit took place in this picturesque lakeside town, which delegates and journalists could only access by boat from Lausanne, Switzerland. Most of them stayed there, shuttled between their free food and sound bites—hence the police divers and their James Bond speedboats. Protesters were kept at arms length in Geneva, Switzerland, the nearby town of Annemasse, and in a few scattered camps toward Grenoble over the border in France again. Despite this jigsaw, many tens of thousands turned up: Police estimated around 50,000, organizers around 100,000. Confirmation on either figure was impossible.

The main demonstration, on Sunday, June 1, linked up French protesters from Grenoble and

the Swiss protesters from Geneva. While the border ceased to exist, vans pumped Rage Against the Machine, salsa, and hip-hop over a crowd eager to make its point.

Somewhat more eager were the so-called Black Bloc, in fact a group predominantly from Germany called the Autonomen. Their youth and vigor are as astounding as their desire to confront the authorities. Marching from their camp in the south of Geneva, they attacked a BP petrol station before turning back into Geneva to create barricades and fires and physically attack Swiss police with rocks, bottles, and anything else that came to hand. The Mont Blanc bridge and the Boulevard Façon were seas of broken glass and gas canister parts in a ridiculous game of cat and mouse.

As the main march eventually returned to Geneva, the situation had already worsened, and major standoffs occurred. Many local young men joined in the fray, and eventually order disappeared

Protesters fire  
a roman candle  
at riot police  
June 1 in Geneva.

SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES

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